MORE PAGES! MORE MIND-STAGGERING TALES OF THE BIZARRE

50¢

PSYCHO™

JANUARY 1971

THE SKIN AND BONES SYNDROME!

A DESPERATE CHOICE OF LIFE... OR DEATH!

DRESSED TO KILL!
...AND THEN THERE'S CICERO!
PLUS OTHER HAUNTING EPICS OF FEAR!

PSYCHO

Vol. 1, No. 1 JANUARY 1971

Publishers: Sol Brodsky and Israel Waldman
Editor: Sol Brodsky
Associate Editor: Herschel Waldman
Artists: David Hadley, Paul Reinman, Grey Morrow, Mario Acquaviva
Writers: Gardner Fox, Roger Ellwood, Art Stampler, Wayne Bennedict

Skin and Bones Syndrome page **2**

Glistening Death page **10**

I Painted Only Terror page **16**

The Thing in the Mirror page **24**

Anatomical Monster page **41**

And then there's Cicero page **35**

The Hands of Death page **49**

The Gruesome Faces of Mr. Cliff page **56**

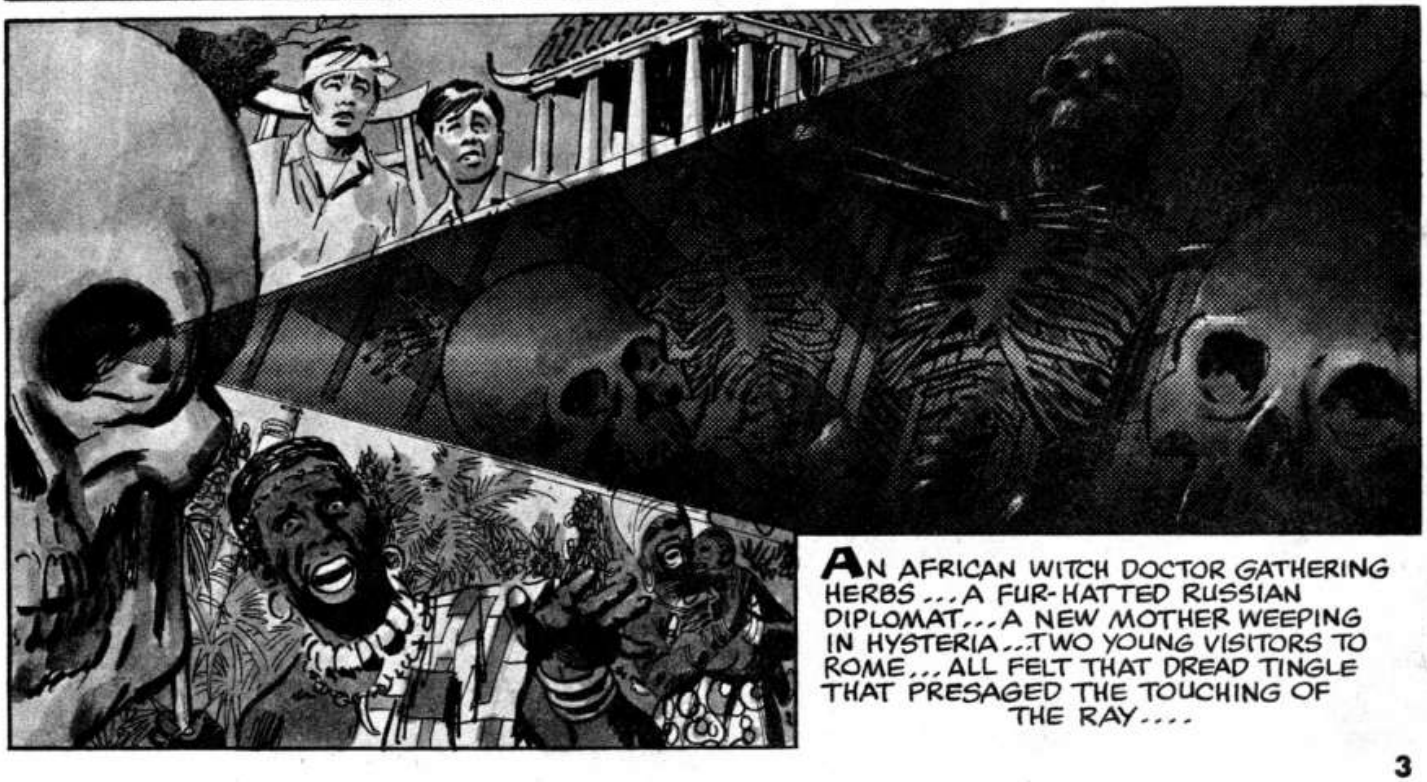
PSYCHO is published by SKYWALD PUBLISHING CORP., 18 East 41 St., New York, N.Y. 10017. Published bi-monthly. All rights reserved. Price 50¢ per copy. Any resemblance to people living or dead is purely coincidental. Nothing can be reprinted in any form without the express permission of the publisher.

Printed in Canada

OUT OF NOWHERE IT CAME-- BRINGING WITH IT A HIDEOUS DEATH-- DISSOLVING HUMAN FLESH IN WHAT CAME TO BE KNOWN AS--
THE SKIN AND BONES SYNDROME!
HEY, WHAT'S THAT FUNNY NOISE?
I WOULDN'T LET THE COMBO HEAR YOU TALKING ABOUT THEIR MUSIC LIKE THAT, BILLY BOY!
ON A WARM JUNE NIGHT, JIMMY PATTON AND PEGGY LYNCH WERE DOING THEIR THING TO THE ROCK MUSIC OF THE HAM AND EGGERS. AND THEN THE LIVING NIGHTMARE BEGAN...
ALL OVER THE WORLD, MEN AND WOMEN WERE CAUGHT UP IN STARK PANIC AS THE GRIM SKULL OF UNIVERSAL DEATH SENT OUT ITS EERIE KILLER BEAMS. NO MAN WAS SAFE, NO WOMAN COULD HOPE TO LIVE...
COULD IT BE SOME ALIEN PLOT?
COULD OUR SUN BE UNDERGOING SOME CHANGE?

I MUST BE FREAKING OUT!
WE-WE MUST BE BLOWING OUR MINDS!
NO! I CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH THOSE PEOPLE! WH... WHAT'S GOING ON? SOMEBODY CALL THE POLICE!

SUDDENLY... A THING OF BONES SAT AT THE CLUB BAR! THE BARTENDER ALSO BECAME A CREATURE OF DEATH, VICTIM OF THIS STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS MALADY STRIKING WITHOUT WARNING, WITHOUT MERCY...



AN AFRICAN WITCH DOCTOR GATHERING HERBS... A FUR-HATTED RUSSIAN DIPLOMAT... A NEW MOTHER WEEPING IN HYSTERIA... TWO YOUNG VISITORS TO ROME... ALL FELT THAT DREAD TINGLE THAT PRESAGED THE TOUCHING OF THE RAY....

PEGGY LYNCH AND JIMMY PATTON FLED THROUGH THE STREETS, JOINING THE THRONG THAT WERE FLEEING IN ALL DIRECTIONS!

HEY, WAIT! I OPERATE A HAM RADIO. COME ON! MAYBE WE CAN FIND OUT WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT?
J... JIMMY... LOOK! IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

SOON, IN THE CELLAR OF HIS HOME, JIMMY IS SPEAKING OVER THE AIR WAVES....

EDDIE, GO ASK PROFESSOR KNUDSEN TO COME TO YOUR MIKE. I WANT TO KNOW IF HE'S NOTICED ANYTHING FUNNY AT THE OBSERVATORY TONIGHT.
AT THE OBSERVATORY? YOU THINK THE TROUBLE THAT'S SPREADING ALL OVER IS COMING FROM OUTER SPACE?

I'M NOT SURE. BUT THE MERE FACT THAT IT'S AFFECTING EVERYBODY ON EARTH SEEMS TO POINT THAT WAY!
OH, JIMMY! WHAT CAN YOU DO? I'M SURE SCIENTISTS AND GENERALS ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE TRYING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

AT THE STATE OBSERVATORY, PROFESSOR KNUDSEN TELLS OF HIS NIGHT-TIME FINDINGS TO YOUNG JIMMY....

JIMMY, WE'VE PICKED UP AN ENERGY BEAM IN SPACE, COMING FROM THE CRAB CONSTELLATION. BUT I WANT TO WARN YOU--EVERY NATION ON EARTH HAS ITS GREATEST BRAINS WORKING TO FIND AN ANSWER TO OUR TROUBLE.

THEN BEGINS FOR JIMMY LYNCH A NIGHT OF PERSONAL TORTURE AS HE BENDS LIKE A STATUE ABOVE HIS SENDING SET...

I'VE GOT MY SET BEAMED UP INTO *SPACE*, PEGGY. LET'S JUST HOPE SOMEBODY *HEARS* ME-- AND *DOES* SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

HEY, YOU UP THERE! YOU'RE *KILLING* US, MAN. *EASE OFF* ON THAT *SKIN-AND-BONES BEAM* OF YOURS... BEFORE YOU DESTROY THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE! DO YOU *DIG* ME? *STOP THAT BEAM* OF YOURS BEFORE THERE'S *NOBODY LEFT* DOWN HERE!

HOUR AFTER HOUR, JIMMY LAYS WORDS ON THE MIKE, HOPING-TRUSTING-- SWALLOWING THE HOT COFFEE PEGGY BREWS TO KEEP HIM AWAKE...

JUST *TURN OFF* THAT RAY, SO WE CAN GO ON *LIVING* DOWN HERE. WE NEVER DID ANYTHING TO *HURT* YOU. HOW'S *ABOUT* IT, MAN-- OR WHATEVER YOU ARE, OUT THERE?

AND THEN--TOWARD DAWN....

AWWWW, IT'S NO USE, PEGGY. JUST NO USE...

YOU DID ALL YOU COULD, JIMMY. MAYBE ONE OF THOSE BRAINY GUYS WILL HAVE BETTER LUCK.

UNKNOWN TO JIMMY LYNCH AND THE REST OF THE WORLD, ON THE PLANET ARANUS, HUNDREDS OF LIGHT YEARS AWAY, IN THE CRAB CONSTELLATION, TWO SCIENTISTS HURRIEDLY CONFER....

SOMETHING VERY MUCH LIKE A RADIO BEAM... PULLED IN BY OUR SPATIAL SCANNERS. WE DON'T UNDERSTAND THE WORDS, BUT THE EMOTION SCREEN SHOWS DESPAIR, PANIC, FRIGHT.

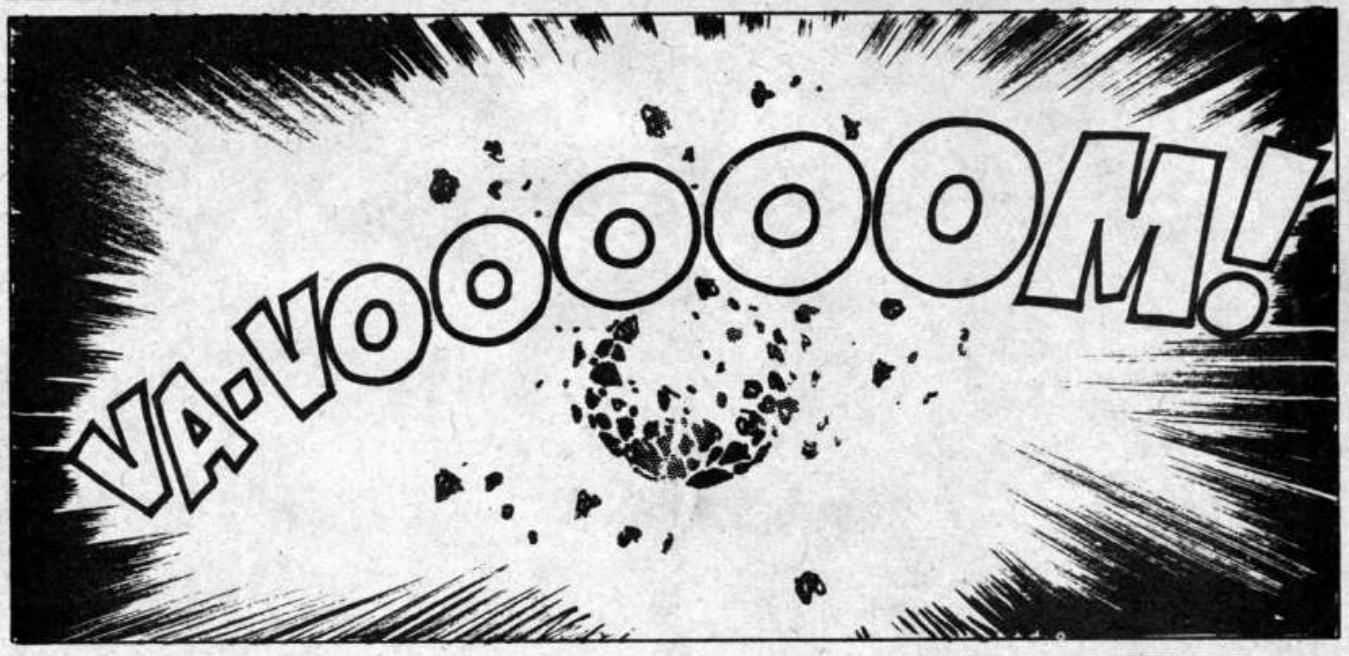
PERHAPS WHEN WE SENT OUT OUR PROBE BEAM, WE CAUSED ACTUAL DAMAGE TO THE INTELLIGENT BEINGS OF SOME WORLD!

ALL OVER EARTH, TRAGEDY AND CATASTROPHE CONTINUE TO TAKE THEIR DEADLY TOLL....
EXIT 16
AMBULANCE
THE PILOT AND CO-PILOT JUST LOST CONTROL...
IT'S HAPPENING EVERYWHERE!
THOSE BEAMS ARE DESTROYING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT!
ORLD-WIDE INS
AINS MOMENTUM!
DEATH TOLL RISES!
Hurt in Crash
Britain Suffers
Train Hits Car, 1 Killed, 1 Hurt
rime in The Street
BUT NOW, AFTER JIMMY HAS MADE HIS DESPERATE PLEA, ALL OF WHAT IS TAKING PLACE ON EARTH IS BEING OBSERVED FOR THE FIRST TIME ON THE PLANET ARANUS....
WE WERE ONCE LIKE THEM!
IT SEEMS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO REMEMBER CLEARLY IT WAS SO LONG AGO!
IT BEGAN WITH THAT FIRST SPACE PROBE! OUR CREW BROUGHT BACK A VIRUS THAT SOON SPREAD DISASTROUSLY.
IT WAS HORROR BEYOND OUR WILDEST IMAGINATION!

IN SOLEMN CONCLAVE, THE LEADERS OF THE PLANET ARANUS MET TO DISCUSS THEIR DESPERATE PROBLEM...
IT WAS A MIRACLE THAT ANY OF US SURVIVED!
WE MUST ISOLATE OURSELVES.. RETARD THE PLAGUE'S SPREAD.. GAIN TIME TO REDIRECT. TO...
OUR CIVILIZATION'S ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE WE MUST DO SOMETHING!
THOUGH OUR BODIES DETERIORATED WE PRESERVED OUR MENTAL CAPACITIES. BUT WE HAD TO DESERT OUR LOVED ONES ...OUR FRIENDS. ONLY THE STRONGEST INTELLECTS COULD GO ON.
AND HERE WE ARE NOW- CAUSING HAVOC ON ANOTHER WORLD. HOW LONG WILL THE COMPLETION OF THESE TESTS TAKE?
WHO CAN TELL? THE VARIOUS CHEMICAL COMPONENTS MUST BE PROPERLY ANALYZED AND BALANCED!
MY DAUGHTER, AURIC, GONE. GHAIL, YOUR WIFE AND SON-
YES, GONE. BETTER THAT THEY ARE, THAN TO HAVE ENDURED THE HELL WE HAVE FACED.
WE HAVE NO ONE. ONLY OURSELVES! NONE OF THE FEMALES HAVE SURVIVED! IN A FEW YEARS, EVEN WITH THE DISEASE SUCCESSFULLY CONTROLLED WE BECOME EXTINCT ANYWAY!

AFTER SOME TIME HAS PASSED...
...THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER... ONLY ONE CHOICE!
ARE WE DECIDED THEN? ARE WE ALL IN AGREEMENT?
YES...
G...GEORGE! DO YOU THINK IT'S SAFE?
WHATEVER IT WAS... SEEMS TO HAVE STOPPED!
SHELTER
THANK GOD! THE PLAGUE SEEMS TO HAVE STOPPED!
FOR GOOD... I HOPE! WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL!
YES! EARTH CAME VERY CLOSE TO BEING ANNIHILATED!
THIS SHOULD TEACH US A LESSON...ON HOW TO HELP EACH OTHER!
YES! INSTEAD OF DESTROYING ONE ANOTHER!
TAXI
AND CAUTIOUS HEADS OF GOVERNMENT GET TOGETHER AT THE UNITED NATIONS, TO DISCUSS THE LIGHT BEAM THAT ALMOST DESTROYED THE WORLD.
WE MUST REALIZE THAT THERE MIGHT BE NATIONS OUTSIDE OUR UNIVERSE WHO MAY BE A THREAT TO OUR SECURITY!
YOU CAN'T REALLY BELIEVE IN ALIEN LIFE?
OTHER FORMS OF LIFE ARE BECOMING A TRUTH WE MUST ACCEPT!
BUT DOES AN ALIEN LIFE NECESSARILY MEAN THEY MUST BE AN ENEMY?

ENEMY? IF THE TRUTH WERE ONLY KNOWN!
WE HAD SO MUCH THAT WAS GOOD IN THIS WORLD OF OURS!..
...AND NOW... NOW WE MUST PAY THE PRICE FOR OUR CURIOSITY!...
ARE WE READY FOR WHAT WE MUST DO?
MY HEART IS FILLED WITH SORROW!
...GOODBYE, DEAR FRIENDS!



AND HUNDREDS OF LIGHT YEARS AWAY, ON EARTH, A HAGGARD BOY AND AN EXHAUSTED GIRL STUMBLE OUT INTO THE DAWN OF A REBORN WORLD!

I GUESS THE SKIN-AND-BONES BEAM ENDED BY ITSELF. I WASTED THE WHOLE NIGHT YAKKIN' INTO A MICROPHONE!
MAYBE SOMEBODY DID HEAR YOU, JIMMY!...
...BUT I GUESS THAT'S SOMETHING WE'LL NEVER KNOW!
The BEGINNING?

THE GLISTENING DEATH
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, UNCLE! I'M GOING TO CHOKE THE BREATH OUT OF YOUR LYING THROAT!
N-NO, I SPEAK THE TRUTH! LOOK THERE, BEHIND YOU! DON'T YOU SEE IT? IT... IT'S THE GLISTENING DEATH!
IT ALL BEGAN WHEN WARREN ARNO DECIDED TO PAY A VISIT TO HIS ECCENTRIC OLD UNCLE, RECLUSE ROBERT ARNO WHO HAD LIVED IN THE LOUISIANA SWAMPS FOR YEARS...
WHAT A WEIRD, SMELLY PLACE! PHEW! BUT IT'S THE PERFECT HIDEOUT FOR ME UNTIL THE HEAT IS OFF IN THE BIG CITY. THE COPS'LL NEVER FIND ME HERE!
KNOCK! KNOCK!
YES? WHAT IS IT YOU WISH.
I'M WARREN ARNO, ROBERT ARNO'S NEPHEW. LET ME IN!
INTO THE SWAMPLANDS, WHERE MANY PEOPLE HAD GONE BUT NONE HAD RETURNED, WENT ARNO! HIS ECCENTRIC UNCLE HAD HOARDED AWAY A FORTUNE IN GOLD... AND A MYSTERIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL GIRL BECKONED HIM WITH HER UNEARTHLY EYES! BUT WAITING PATIENTLY IN THE MURKY DEPTHS OF THE EERIE MARSHLAND WAS A CREATURE WHO LURKED IN SEARCH OF HUMAN PREY FOOLISH ENOUGH TO WANDER INTO THE HUNTING GROUNDS OF...
THE GLISTENING DEATH!

WARREN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I THOUGHT YOU HAD A BUSINESS IN THE CITY!
I DID, UNCLE! BUT THINGS GOT A LITTLE --UH-- SLOW! AREN'T YOU GOING TO WELCOME ME?

YES-- OF COURSE... HUGO! SHOW MY NEPHEW TO THE GUEST ROOM! HE PROBABLY NEEDS TO REST! THE TRIP THROUGH THE SWAMP CAN BE QUITE STRENUOUS!
ALL RIGHT, MR. ARNO! FOLLOW ME... DINNER IS AT SEVEN!

THE YOUNG MAN PACED UP AND DOWN IN HIS ROOM, THINKING OUT HIS NEXT MOVE...

SO AT DINNER WARREN ARNO PLAYED HIS CARDS WITH SLICK PERFECTION...

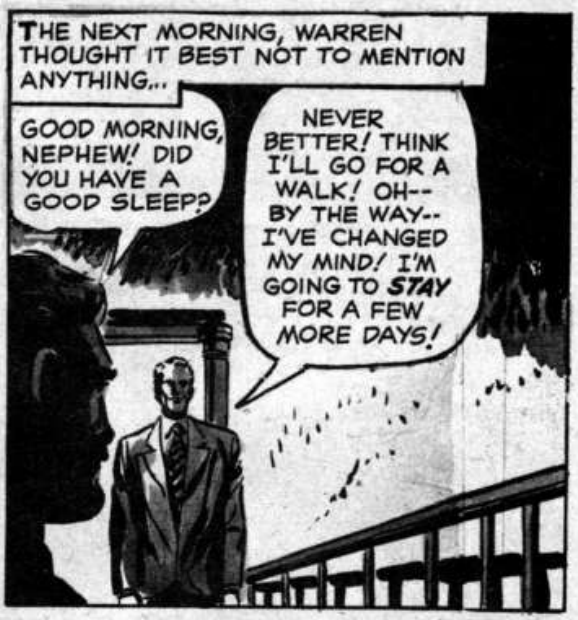
TELL ME, UNCLE! HOW CAN YOU STAND TO LIVE HERE IN THIS PLACE? YOU HAVE NO ELECTRICITY, NO MODERN CONVENIENCES...
I LIKE QUIET, WARREN! AND I AM COMPLETELY CONTENT HERE!

BUT YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME! THE SWAMP IS NO PLACE FOR OUTSIDERS! THERE ARE DANGERS HERE THAT ORDINARY PEOPLE CANNOT UNDERSTAND! YOU MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY!

YOU MUST BE JOKING, UNCLE! I PLAN TO STAY HERE FOR SOME TIME! BUT WHAT ARE THESE-- DANGERS?
I-- I CANNOT SAY! BUT IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE AND YOUR SANITY, YOU'LL LISTEN TO ME!

LOOK OUT THERE! UNKNOWN TERROR LURKS OUT THERE! TAKE MY ADVICE! LEAVE WHILE YOU CAN!
PERHAPS I WILL, UNCLE-- IN THE MORNING...
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK! IT'S OBVIOUS THAT YOU'RE HIDING SOMETHING FROM ME! BUT, WHAT...?

WARREN ARNO WENT TO BED THAT NIGHT WITH MANY DOUBTS IN HIS MIND ABOUT HIS UNCLE'S SANITY. BOTHERED BY A STRANGE UNEASINESS, HE SLEPT FITFULLY, UNTIL...


THE NEXT MORNING, WARREN THOUGHT IT BEST NOT TO MENTION ANYTHING...
GOOD MORNING, NEPHEW! DID YOU HAVE A GOOD SLEEP?
NEVER BETTER! THINK I'LL GO FOR A WALK! OH--BY THE WAY--I'VE CHANGED MY MIND! I'M GOING TO STAY FOR A FEW MORE DAYS!

FOR HE HAD A PLAN-- AND NOW HIS SUSPICIONS WERE STRONGER.
THAT OLD GOAT TRIED TO SCARE ME! PROBABLY HIS CARETAKER IN SOME SORT OF COSTUME! I BET HE'S HIDING GOLD ON THE GROUNDS...

WARREN DUG UP HALF THE PLACE IN SEARCH OF THE TREASURE HE SUSPECTED HIS UNCLE OF HAVING HOARDED. BUT HE FOUND NOTHING! AND THAT EVENING...
WHY SHOULD A MAN WANT TO LIVE HERE-- IF NOT FOR SOME WEALTH HE'S CAREFULLY GUARDED. HE'S KNOWN TO BE A MISER...
KNOCK KNOCK!

WELL- HELLO! I DIDN'T KNOW OTHER PEOPLE LIVED HERE! I THINK I'M GOING TO LIKE MY STAY!
I SHALL LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR PRESENCE, THEN!

I'LL BE OVER TO YOUR HOUSE-- LATER! NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US!
I SHALL EXPECT YOU! GOOD BYE, MY NEW FRIEND! I HOPE I SHALL SEE YOU VERY SOON!

UNCLE! YOU TREATED HER SHAMELESSLY! I DEMAND AN EXPLANATION!
WARREN, I-- I'M NOT FEELING WELL! HUGO-- HELP ME TO MY ROOM!

PUZZLED, WARREN RETIRED TO HIS ROOM... BUT ONLY TO WAIT FOR HIS UNCLE'S FOOT-STEPS... MOMENTS AFTERWARD...
HE'S LEAVING FOR THE SWAMPS! THIS IS GETTING MORE CRAZY BY THE MINUTE! I'LL FOLLOW HIM...

WARREN SHADOWED HIS UNCLE INTO THE FOUL-SMELLING MARSHES...
WHY DID HE SEEM SO SUBSERVIENT TO HER? WHO IS SHE? I MUST FIND--→UGHHH! SOMETHING'S GOT ME ABOUT THE ANKLE!

FORGIVE ME IF I WAS TARDY! I--I COULDN'T COME TO YOU WITH MY NEPHEW IN THE HOUSE!
IT IS WELL! FOLLOW ME-- INTO THE SWAMP!

I--I OBEY! INTO THE SWAMP!
AND TO MY DEN, WHERE I SHALL FEED ON YOUR OFFERINGS! HA, HA, HA!

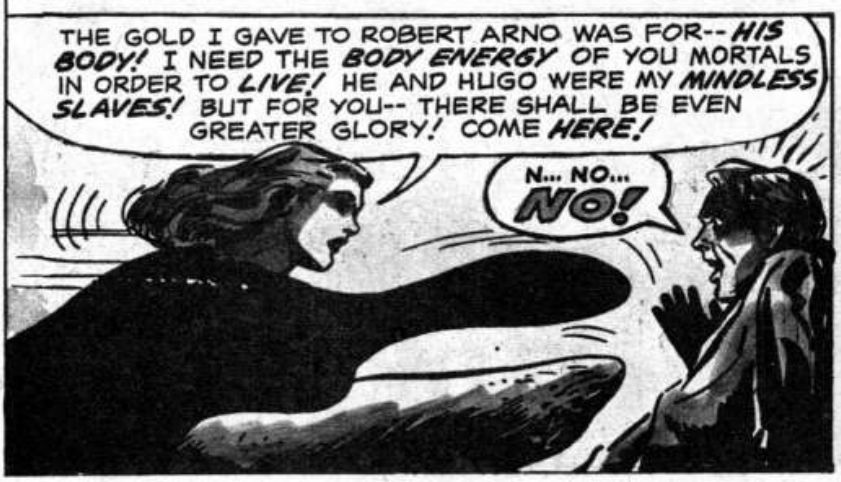
S-STAY AWAY! DON'T TOUCH ME!
BANG BANG BANG
I--I SHOT INTO IT-- AND IT WON'T DIE! GOT TO GET IT OFF ME!
HELP! SOMEONE HELP ME!
SOMEHOW, WARREN MANAGED TO GET THE CREATURE AWAY FROM HIM...
I... I'VE GOT TO GET BACK IN THE HOUSE... PUFF... PUFF...
IT--IT WAS THE SAME THING THAT TRIED TO CHOKE ME LAST NIGHT! THAT-- THAT WAS REAL! WHAT'S GOING ON IN THIS MAD HOUSE?
WARREN ARNO TIPTOED PAST HIS UNCLE'S ROOM AND...
ANOTHER SACK OF GOLD! I-I CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE! I--I'LL GO MAD!
UNCLE ROBERT LISTEN TO ME!
YOU DIRTY MISER! YOU TRIED TO FRIGHTEN ME! YOU DIDN'T WANT ME TO SEE YOUR GOLD!
NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! I DISCOVERED A HORROR OUT THERE IN THE SWAMP-- WITH AN ALIEIN INTELLIGENCE GREATER THAN OUR OWN! I--I'M ITS SLAVE! IT GIVES ME GOLD IN RETURN!
YOU DIRTY, OLD LIAR! I'LL CHOKE THE BREATH OUT OF YOUR THROAT!
WARREN-- DON'T PLEASE! ARRRGHH!

WARREN ARNO SQUEEZED UNTIL HIS FINGERS MET IN THEIR OWN *EMBRACE OF DEATH.* THEN HE WENT *GOLD-CRAZY-- LAUGHING, SHOUTING, SINGING--* UNTIL SOMEONE STOOD BEFORE HIM IN THE DOORWAY...

AND WHAT OF-- HUGO? WHAT SHALL BE DONE WITH *HIM?* WHO WILL THERE BE TO TAKE CARE OF *ME?*
I'LL KNOCK *HIM* OFF, TOO! I'VE KILLED PLENTY OF SQUARES IN MY TIME! THAT'S WHY I'M HERE! BUT NOW WE GOT *MILLIONS,* BOTH OF US!

SO YOU WILL TAKE CARE OF ME? THEN YOU DO NOT KNOW! HA, HA! *GOOD!* IT IS EVEN *BETTER* THAN I HAD WISHED! YES-- YOU ARE YOUNG, STRONG! YOU SHALL BE *EXCELLENT!*
WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING ABOUT?*

YOUR UNCLE'S TASK WAS TO FEED ME WITH *MEAT-- RED MEAT!* I AM THE FIRST OF MY SPECIES ON YOUR PLANET. I MUST *GROW!* I MUST HAVE *SUSTENANCE!* YOU WILL HELP ME TO *GROW!*
NO! *NO!* YOU'RE CHANGING! I-- I-- DON'T BELIEVE IT! *THE MONSTER FROM THE SWAMPS!*


THE GOLD I GAVE TO ROBERT ARNO WAS FOR-- *HIS BODY!* I NEED THE *BODY ENERGY* OF YOU MORTALS IN ORDER TO *LIVE!* HE AND HUGO WERE MY *MINDLESS SLAVES!* BUT FOR YOU-- THERE SHALL BE EVEN GREATER GLORY! COME *HERE!*
N... NO... *NO!*

I PAINTED ONLY TERROR!

FASTER! FASTER!
PAUL BEAUMONT, BUILT HIS FAME WITH HIS PAINTINGS OF HUMAN TERROR! AND THEN HE PLANNED HIS MASTERPIECE! NOTHING WOULD STOP HIM-- NOT EVEN THOUGH IT COST THE LIFE OF HIS BEAUTIFUL MODEL! HOW COULD PAUL BEAUMONT KNOW THE GRISELY RETRIBUTION THAT WOULD COME...
AFTER THIS JOB, I'M GOING TO PAINT IT! THE PICTURE OF A PERSON MORE FRIGHTENED THAN ANYONE HAS BEEN BEFORE! HA! HA! HA! MY MASTERPIECE!
DOC, I CAN'T SLEEP! I'M HAVING MONSTROUS NIGHTMARES! AS YOU MAY KNOW I'M AN ARTIST WHO SPECIALIZES IN PORTRAITS OF TERROR!
I AM WELL ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR WORK. YOU'RE A HIGHLY RESPECTED ARTIST!
HOW DID YOU BECOME OBSESSED WITH THE TOPIC OF TERROR AS THE MAIN SUBJECT OF YOUR WORK?

I ALWAYS LIKED TO STUDY *TERROR!* IT... IT *FASCINATED* ME! I REMEMBER THE FIRST PAINTING I DID! I PAINTED A WOMAN'S FACE FROM MEMORY! I WAS IN A CROWD, WATCHING A *FIRE*, AND THERE WAS A WOMAN IN A *BURNING WINDOW*...

HELP! *HELP!*

MY PICTURE OF THAT WOMAN MADE A HIT! ...I DISCOVERED I'M *GOOD* AT PAINTING THAT SORT OF THING! I GOT A CHANCE TO SEE A MAN ELECTROCUTED! I'LL NEVER FORGET THE WAY HE *LOOKED* WHEN HE FIRST SAW THE CHAIR...

I'VE PAINTED *HUNDREDS* OF THAT KIND OF PICTURE! I'M *FAMOUS!* BUT, DOC... I'M GETTING TOO *NERVOUS!* DOC, WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH ME?

FEAR IS COMMUNICABLE! YOU'VE DABBLED IN IT *TOO MUCH!* I'D ADVISE YOU TO *GIVE UP* PAINTING THINGS LIKE THAT! TRY PAINTING PRETTY FARM SCENES... A RIVER! BIRDS IN THE TREES!

DOC, ARE YOU *CRAZY?*

ME, PAINT THINGS LIKE *THAT?* HA! HA! THAT'S FUNNY! WHY... I PAINT ONLY *TERROR!*

YOU HAD BETTER STOP BEFORE IT'S TOO *LATE*, MR. BEAUMONT!

OKAY, DOC, THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO! I'LL GO RIGHT HOME AND PAINT A PICTURE OF MAMA BIRD FEEDING LITTLE BABY BIRD! GOOD IDEA! THANKS FOR THE ADVICE! *HA! HA!*

BACK AT HOME, THAT EVENING...
THAT DOC THINKS I'M CRAZY! WHAT A LAUGH!

...BUT HE'S RIGHT, IT'S MAKING ME NERVOUS! I KNOW WHAT I'LL DO-- I'LL PAINT JUST ONE SUPREME MASTERPIECE! IT'LL BRING ME FAME ALL OVER THE WORLD!

...NOW WHAT I'LL NEED IS A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG GIRL MODEL! I'LL TELL HER NOTHING! THEN I'LL FRIGHTEN HER-- OH, I'LL FRIGHTEN HER, ALL RIGHT...

PAUL BEAUMONT LIVED IN A SUBURBAN COTTAGE, WITH HIS ELDERLY HOUSEKEEPER! BUT THE OLD WOMAN WAS AWAY THIS WEEK! HE MADE HIS DIABOLICAL PREPARATIONS!
...MY HIGH-SPEED CAMERA, HIDDEN! WHEN I GET HER REALLY FRIGHTENED, IT'LL SNAP A CLOSEUP OF HER FACE!...

I'LL HAVE THAT SNAPSHOT OF HOW SHE LOOKS, AS TERRIFIED AS ANYBODY CAN BE! THEN I'LL PAINT FROM THE PHOTOGRAPH! I'LL PUT THE AD IN TOMORROW!

AND, AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT...
I'M SURE SICK OF WORKIN' IN THE FIVE AN' TEN!
I'M GOOD LOOKIN, WHY COULDN'T I BE A MODEL!

BOX 4321
MODEL WANTED. GOOD PAY. NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY. APPLY JOHN ALLEN, RIVER ROAD.
THIS LOOKS LIKE ITS WORTH A TRY!
THAT SAME EVENING...
HMMM, SORTA LIKE-- A HAUNTED HOUSE! OH, WELL!
YOU SAW MY AD? COME IN, MY DEAR!
T-THANK YOU!
IT SEEMED SIMPLE ENOUGH-- POSING FOR AN ARTIST WHO WANTED TO PAINT HER PICTURE!
YES, I THINK THAT YOU WILL DO! WE'LL START NOW! YOU'LL FIND YOUR COSTUME IN THE DRESSING ROOM!
OH! ALL RIGHT, SIR!
AND PRESENTLY...
I'M READY, MR. BEAUMONT!
OH, GOOD! I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE!
TO THE UNSUSPECTING GIRL IT WAS A GRISLY, TERRIBLE SHOCK! SHE STOOD TRANSFIXED, WITH THE BLOOD DRAINING FROM HER FACE AND HER HEART RACING!
AAAAIIEE!
GRRRR... NOW MY CAMERA WILL PHOTOGRAPH HER FACE! OH, SHE'S FRIGHTENED ALL NIGHT!

THEN, SUDDENLY, BEAUMONT FELT HER GO LIMP IN HIS GRIP! HE DID NOT REALIZE WHAT HAD HAPPENED! HE WAS LAUGHING WILDLY WITH EXCITEMENT AS HIS CAMERA CLICKED...
...GOT IT! JUST PERFECT...
AND IN ANOTHER MOMENT...
WH...WHY-- SHE'S DEAD! I FRIGHTENED HER TO DEATH!
THE ULTIMATE OF HUMAN TERROR! TRIUMPH SURGED IN BEAUMONT! HE BURIED THE BODY OUT IN THE DARK, LONELY WOODS NEAR HIS COTTAGE...
NOW I'LL DEVELOP THE PHOTOGRAPH AND PAINT MY MASTERPIECE FROM IT!
IN THE LITTLE DARK ROOM IN HIS CELLAR...
IT'S COMING OUT PERFECTLY. THAT GIRL SAID SHE WAS NEW IN TOWN-- NO FAMILY-- NO FRIENDS-- NO ONE WILL EVEN MISS HER!
AT MIDNIGHT HE WAS READY! BUT, SUDDENLY...
WHA--?! NO! NO-- IT CAN'T BE! YOU'RE DEAD AND BURIED! I'M JUST IMAGINING THINGS!
DEAD-- YES! BUT YOU'VE GOT YOUR MASTERPIECE TO PAINT! REMEMBER?
PAINT IT! PAINT IT! YOU WANT A PICTURE OF HUMAN TERROR? GO ON, PAINT IT!
YES, OF COURSE I WILL! MY MASTERPIECE! HA! NOBODY WILL EVER PAINT A PICTURE OF TERROR LIKE THIS ONE!

THE HOURS PASSED... THROUGH THE NIGHT... AND WHEN THE DAWN CAME...
DON'T STOP, I TELL YOU! KEEP GOING! YOUR MASTERPIECE, REMEMBER?
YES! YES! HA! IT'S PERFECT! PERFECT!

EARLY THAT MORNING, BEAUMONT'S OLD HOUSEKEEPER UNEXPECTEDLY RETURNED...
IT'S ALMOST DONE NOW! SURE, I'M FRIGHTENED! OH, I'M FRIGHTENED ALL RIGHT! THAT MAKES IT EVEN BETTER, DOESN'T IT? HA! HA! HA!
...HE'S GONE OUT OF HIS MIND!...

THE STUDIO DOOR WAS LOCKED. AFTER A MOMENT, THE OLD WOMAN RAN FOR THE POLICE! AND...
IT'S ALL FINISHED! HA! HA! HO! HO! HO!
WE BETTER BREAK DOWN THE DOOR, CLANCY!
YEAH!

THEN THERE WAS A CRASH INSIDE THE STUDIO, AND, AS THE POLICEMEN BROKE IN...
MR. BEAUMONT! MR. BEAUMONT!... NO!

HE'S DEAD!
HEY LOOK AT THIS! HE SAT BEFORE THE MIRROR, PAINTING!

HIS SUPREME MASTERPIECE... AS HE SAT BEFORE THE MIRROR! HIS... SELF PORTRAIT!
The End

PSYCHO'S GRUESOME GALLERY

NO. 1

THIS ONE FROM THE ANNALS OF THE TALENTED STEVE HICKMAN

NO ONE ACTUALLY KNOWS WHAT THE ***GIBBERING THING*** REALLY IS! IF YOU WANT TO SEE IT, WELL, MCKEILLY'S CARNIVAL HAS IT ON DISPLAY! LIKE A GILA MONSTER OR A MISSING LINK ***"WILD MAN"!*** MCKEILLY SWEARS IT ISN'T A FAKE, HE SAYS HE DOESN'T KNOW ***WHAT*** IT IS! WHICH IS TRUE, OF COURSE! BUT THE MYSTERY OF JAMES CRAWFORD SEEMS TO FIT, AND HERE IS WHAT PROBABLY HAPPENED! IT'S ***WEIRD, GRUESOME*** STUFF, THE STORY OF THE...

THE THING IN THE MIRROR!

JAMES CRAWFORD HAD EVERYTHING IN LIFE HANDED TO HIM ON A SILVER PLATTER! HE WAS HANDSOME, INTELLIGENT, AND WEALTHY! BUT THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE NICE ABOUT HIM! AS A CHILD--

I HATE HIM! HE'S ***MEAN!***

MY POP SAYS HE'S THE KIND WHO GOES TO JAIL WHEN HE GROWS UP!

YAH! WHO CARES WHAT **YOU** THINK?

WEALTHY MR. AND MRS. CRAWFORD HAD ADOPTED HIM AS A BABY. THEY TRIED TO LOVE HIM, BUT...

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, ANNE! HE'D BE A GOOD ATHLETE, BUT THEY'VE THROWN HIM OFF EVERY TEAM--HE WON'T PLAY ***FAIR!***

HE WAS ABOUT NINETEEN WHEN THE *NEWS* CAME THAT MR. AND MRS. CRAWFORD HAD BOTH BEEN *KILLED* IN A PLANE CRASH! CRAWFORD WAS *NOT EXACTLY UPSET!*

BOTH KILLED, YOU SAY? *OHH!* WHAT D'YOU KNOW! I'M RICH! AND NOBODY TO BOSS ME! WONDERFUL!

THE DETAILS OF CRAWFORD'S LIFE FOR A FEW YEARS AFTER THAT ARE NOT IMPORTANT! WHEN HE WAS 25--

THERE'S THE GIRL I WANT TO *MARRY!* SHE'S ENGAGED TO THAT FELLOW GEORGE DANA! *SO WHAT?* A GARGOYLE LIKE THAT OUGHTN'T BE HARD TO GET RID OF! NOT FOR A HANDSOME FELLOW LIKE *ME!*

BUT EVIDENTLY IT *WAS* HARD, BECAUSE BARBARA JOHNSON LOVED GEORGE DANA! AND AFTER A FEW WEEKS...

SHE JUST *THINKS* SHE LOVES HIM! IF ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO HIM, I'D MOVE RIGHT IN!

GEORGE DANA WORKED IN THE EXPERIMENTAL LAB OF AN ELECTRIC COMPANY! HIS EMPLOYERS CONSIDERED HIM AN ELECTRICAL GENIUS!

HE'LL BE ANOTHER EDISON SOME DAY! MARK MY WORDS!

I'M SURE HE WILL!

THE SLY CRAWFORD MADE HIMSELF DANA'S FRIEND! AND ONE EVENING, WHEN DANA WAS WORKING ALONE IN THE LAB...

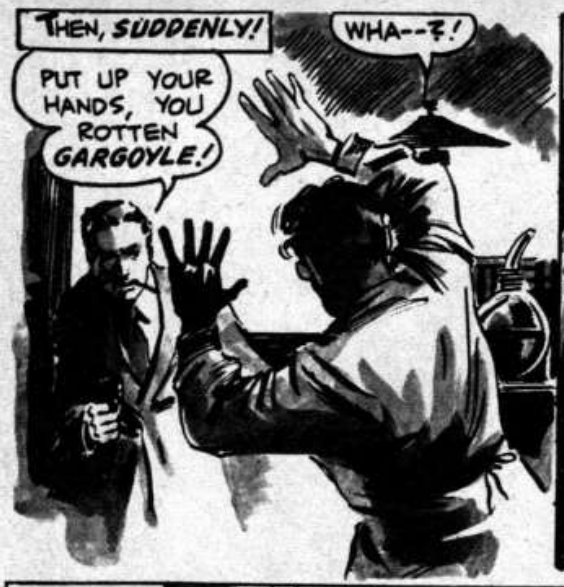
HELLO, GEORGE! JUST THOUGHT I'D STOP IN FOR A FEW MINUTES TO SEE YOU AT WORK!

SURE, JIM! SIT DOWN. GUESS I CAN SPARE SOME TIME FOR A SMOKE!

CAREFUL WHAT YOU *TOUCH!* IT'S ALL VERY *HIGH VOLTAGE!*

OKAY!

WE'RE *ALONE* HERE! NO ONE WOULD *KNOW!*



I'M ON TO YOU! PLANNING TO MURDER ME, BECAUSE YOU THINK I'LL GET BABS AWAY FROM YOU!
IF I CAN BACK HIM AGAINST THAT BIG ELECTRODE--
JIM! JIM, ARE YOU CRAZY?

IT WAS SO SIMPLE! CRAWFORD SCREAMED WILDLY FOR THE NIGHT WATCHMAN! AND WHEN THE CURRENT WAS TURNED OFF...

PEOPLE WHO KNEW JAMES CRAWFORD WILL TELL YOU HE WAS VERY SYMPATHETIC AT THE FUNERAL...
I FEEL SO TERRIBLY FOR YOU, BABS, DEAR! HE WAS A WONDERFUL FELLOW!
OH, HE WAS! HE WAS!

WHAT LUCK THE VILLANOUS CRAWFORD MIGHT HAVE HAD WITH THE BEREAVED GIRL, NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW--BECAUSE, ONLY A FEW NIGHTS LATER...

HE WHIRLED TO SEE WHAT WAS *BEHIND* HIM IN THE ROOM, BUT...

NOTHING HERE!

M...MUST BE MY NERVES!

BUT IT WASN'T NERVES... FOR AS CRAWFORD LOOKED BACK INTO THE MIRROR, HE SAW IT... JUST *A COUPLE OF FEET TALL!* A *GREEN BLUR* TAKING *FORM!* CLARIFYING!

IT'S THERE! **W-WHAT IS IT? UGH!**

I'M NOT IMAGINING IT, IT'S *REAL* ALL RIGHT!

THERE IS NO ONE WHO COULD TELL YOU THE EXACT DETAILS OF WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT! BUT THE WEALTHY CRAWFORD HAD SEVERAL SERVANTS, AND...

SOMETHING'S THE MATTER WITH THE MASTER! HE WON'T EAT HARDLY ANYTHING I COOK!

HE'S *CRAZY* IF YOU ASK ME!

SURE IS!

..."LAST NIGHT, IN THE LIVING ROOM..."

KEEP THAT *MIRROR* FACING THE WALL, I TELL YOU!

WHY--WHY YES, MR. CRAWFORD! I'M SORRY!

"...NOW HE WON'T SHAVE HIMSELF ANYMORE! THIS MORNING..."

NO NO!

IT'S THERE! *ALWAYS THERE!*

THEN CAME THAT *TERRIBLE NIGHT...*

I CAN'T LET IT FRIGHTEN ME LIKE THIS! IT'S ONLY MY IMAGINATION, ANYWAY! I'LL FACE IT AND *BANISH* IT *FOREVER!*

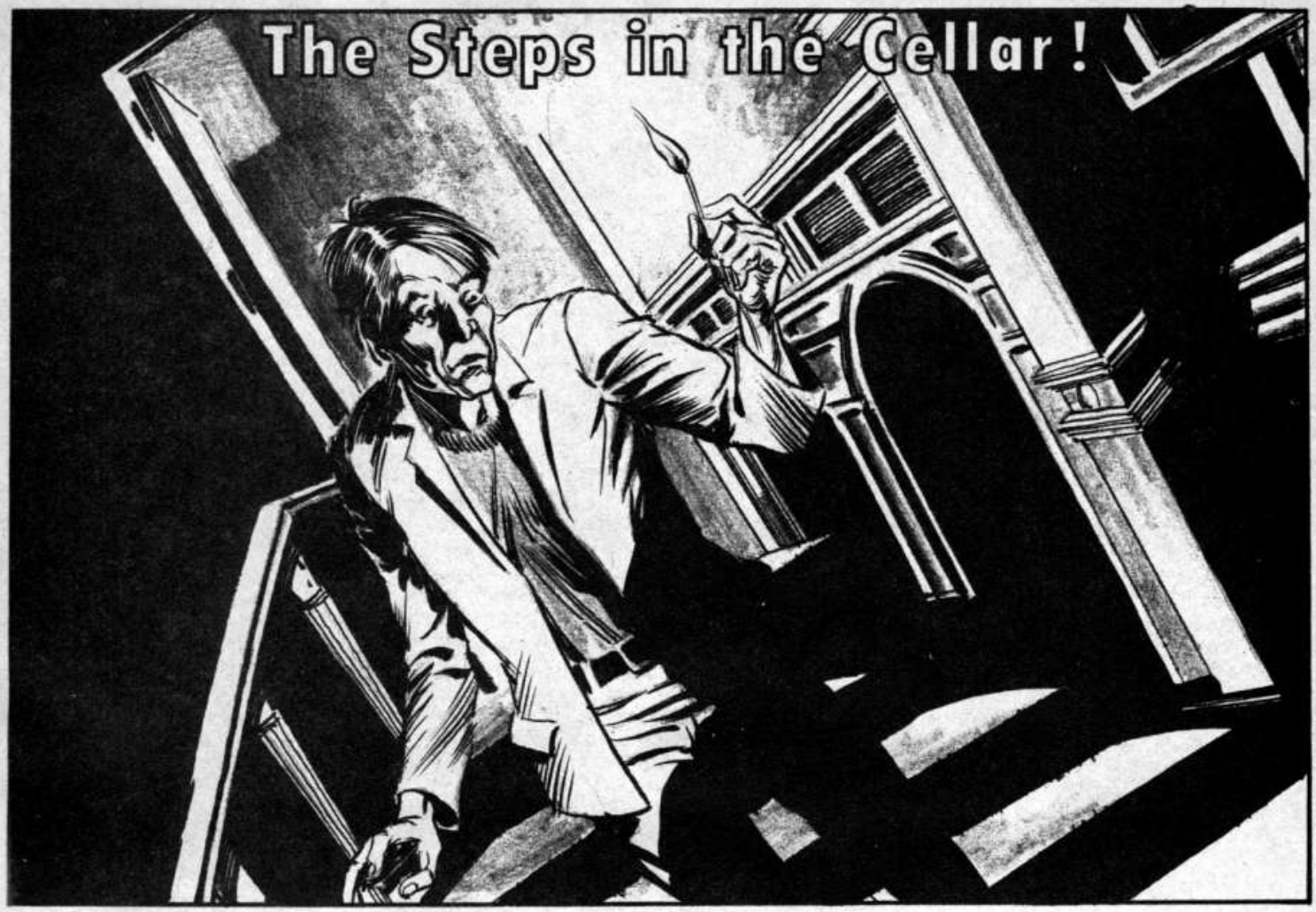
WHA--?

GO AWAY! STOP TORTURING ME!
WHO ARE YOU?... WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
NO! NO! DON'T COME OUT!
YOU THOUGHT I WAS UGLY, DIDN'T YOU, CRAWFORD? HA, HA! NOW YOU'LL FIND OUT HOW IT FEELS TO BE REALLY UGLY!
I COULD HAVE SWORN YOU WERE DEAD. THIS CAN'T BE!
NO! NO! KEEP AWAY FROM ME!!
GHASTLY METAMORPHOSIS! IN THOSE HORRIBLE SECONDS THE BODY OF CRAWFORD DWINDLED-- FADED AWAY!
AIEEEEEE
EEE
EEEE
THEN JAMES CRAWFORD, AS THE WORLD KNEW HIM, WAS GONE! AND...
HOW DO YOU LIKE THE WAY YOU LOOK NOW CRAWFORD? HA, HA, HA!
YOU'RE INSANE! INSANE!
HIS OUTCRIES BROUGHT THE OTHER SERVANTS, AND AS THEY PEERED INTO THE LIVING ROOM...
THE MASTER'S GONE!
HE TURNED INTO A-- A LITTLE GREEN THING! I--I SAW IT!

POLICE RECORDS WILL TELL YOU THAT THE WEALTHY JAMES CRAWFORD DISAPPEARED THAT NIGHT! HE HAS NEVER BEEN HEARD OF SINCE! BUT IT HAPPENS THAT MCKEILLY'S CARNIVAL CAME TO TOWN A FEW DAYS LATER! MCKEILLY AND ONE OF HIS MEN CHANCED TO BE IN THE NEAR-BY WOODS ONE AFTERNOON, AND...

DON'T BE SURPRISED IF AT A CIRCUS SIDE SHOW A FUNNY LITTLE THING MAY PERHAPS CROSS YOUR PATH!

THIS WAY TO THE GIBBERING THING! LADEEZ N' GENTS! IT LIVES! IT BREATHS! FREAK OF THE AGES! ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND ON EARTH!
ATTRACTION THE FLYING RAFANIELLOS
THE GIBBERING THING
IT LOOKS TERRIFIED! TORTURED!
YOU'D SWEAR IT WAS TRYING TO COMMUNICATE SOMETHING!
ENTRANCE THE GIBBERING THING



By Art Stampler

It was an old house; dark and gloomy. Pete Welch felt a vague foreboding chill deep within his spine as he looked into the blank, cheerless windows.

But it was the only house within miles, and probably the only deserted house in the whole countryside, and a storm was blowing up. To an old pro like Pete Welch the only thing to do in a storm was seek shelter, and that was all there was to it. He turned his coat collar up and went into the weed-grown yard.

The door was open, which saved him the trouble of breaking a window. The hinges were rusty, and they squeaked when he swung the door ajar. There was a musty smell in the air; it struck his nostrils the moment he set foot within the place.

He laughed shortly to himself; he was letting his imagination run away with him. This house was no different than hundreds of other houses he had grabbed a night's sleep in while "on the road."

He was hungry. Not much chance of any food being found in a deserted old shack like this one, though. A bottle, now, there was a different story. Many a time he had found an overlooked bottle of whisky or wine on a dusty shelf. He'd have a look.

It was confoundedly dark in the old house. He tried the lights, but they wouldn't work. So he lighted a match and looked about him. Rats, frightened by the yellow flickering of the match, scuttled dryly across the old floor. The room was bare. Another room showed nothing of promise. And then he entered what must have at one time been the kitchen. It, too, was bare of furnishings, but a stairwell was at one end of the room. Pete looked at the door. There seemed to be an inscription on the door. Pete brought the match closer to the dusty old wooden panel.

If this door you swing ajar
Your ghastly doom will not
be far!

The match had burned too low, and it seared his fingers. He dropped it with a curse, and with shaking hands hastened to light another and hold it up to the door. But, in the light of the new match, no inscription was to be seen!

My imagination is playing Old Ned with me tonight, he thought.

He tried the door. It swung open almost before his hand touched the knob. The feeble light of the old candle was not powerful enough to pierce the gloom which lay within, but Pete could see that a flight of stone stairs led below.

It led to the cellar, no doubt, he thought. *That is where I am most likely to find wine.*

He started to descend. Before he had gone three steps the door behind him slammed shut with a bang that rang of finality. He leaped back and pushed against the door, but it held fast. "Probably a spring lock," he muttered, "although I don't remember seeing it on the door. Oh, well.." he shrugged. He'd climbed out of cellar windows before; he could again.

A cold gust of wind arose from the blackness below. It blew out the tiny flame of the match. He felt in his pocket with frantic fingers, but the pack of remaining matches was not to be found. Stumblingly, feeling the wall in front of him, he crept down the rest of the stairs. Then, at the bottom, he cried out and flung his forearm up to cover his eyes.

For the cellar was lighted with a

brightness that blinded him!

A withered old crone stood in the middle of the stone floor. Her hair was as white as wood ashes, her skin as rough and brown as the bark of a tree, and her small, blue eyes glittered like diamonds.

"What do you wish to take with you?" she said. To look at her one would have expected a croaking hoarseness akin to the raven's call, but the sound of her voice was melodious and beautiful. It stilled all the fears evoked in Pete's mind because of her sudden appearance.

"I didn't think anyone lived here," Pete said. "This your house?"

"It is part of me; my children built it. What do you wish to take with you?"

"I want some wine. Do you have any wine?"

"Alas, it is too late for that. There have been those who have said that the waters of my house were like wines. But it is too late for that."

Pete looked at her curiously. "Well, I'll be goin', then. How do you open that door up there?"

"Alas," the old crone said again. "There is no going back. There is never any going back. There is but one way out, and that way is forward." She pointed a bony finger, and for the first time Pete noticed the stairway which led into the depths of the cellar floor.

"What's down there?" he asked. "Is it another cellar? Is there an exit down there?"

But she only answered, "It is the only way out."

The calm, beautiful voice infuriated him. He struck at her roughly and she fell to her knees. Suddenly a clap of thunder shook the foundations of the old house. It was the loudest thunder that Pete had ever heard.

The storm must have started outside, he thought. Maybe I should stay here with her...

But the look in the cold blue eyes chilled and repelled him. He hurried to the stairway and started to run down the stone steps. It was an odd flight of stairs, the oddest Pete had ever seen. A weird blue glow seemed to come from the walls on either side of him; and looking up he could have sworn that overhead wheeled all the stars he had ever seen! Cold and blue, they stared down unwinkingly. They reminded him of the eyes of the old woman up above, and he ran faster.

The music started, then. He stopped running when he heard it, but then he could hear nothing. It started again when he resumed his descent, and after several trial starts and stops he determined that he could hear the weird sound only while he continued downward to what lay at the bottom of the stairs.

It was strange, that music! It was wonder and terror rolled into one stream of sound that lashed at him and curled round his throat and seemed to push at his back, hurrying him onward. It told the story of the first man he had blackjacked, the first money he had stolen, the first woman he had beaten. It told of the nights in the death row, before he escaped with the fire snapping and the stars wheeling cold and blue overhead. It told of...

But the music had stopped.

He had come to the bottom of the stairs. A door was there. It was a heavy stone door. It was enscribed with many words, in many tongues, and embossed with pictures that Pete did not want to look at.

Pete touched the door. It opened instantly, noiselessly, as if it had done so innumerable times before.

He stepped into the darkened corridor that lay stretched before him and he saw that the walls were made of quartz. He followed the winding path until it came to a staircase leading to an inky depth far below.

He was scared; sweat beaded down his forehead, and he wanted to turn and run, but there was a solid wall behind him...IN THE DIRECTION HE HAD JUST COME.

Fear etched its ugly claws across his face and he began running down the granite steps. Each time he turned around the wall right behind him, following him, chasing him, haunting him. He had nowhere to go but forward.

Suddenly the music resumed, but this time with a ferocity that chilled his blood. For far above the screaming jarring noise, he could hear voices... voices not human, wailing like a wounded animal...chanting. Chanting voices singing in counterpart to the hideous music.

He found himself in a cave far below the crust of the earth and saw an eerie light shining ahead. He could not describe the light nor the colors he saw. It was just unearthly...hideously unearthly.

But still he was drawn to it like a moth to a flame. He tried desperately to turn about, but he could not.

He continued further towards the cacaphony of colors and found himself on a ledge far above an open abyss, and he stared downwards in horror at the sight far below. For there were scores of men and women standing naked over a weirdly shaped drawing etched upon the floor. One of the men took a book of scarlet fire from a dark ebony casing and began reading from it. They all joined in, and the words they uttered were unlike any he had ever heard before, as if they were in some obscene language long since forgotten.

One of the crones sat by a strange looking organ and from it issued forth the weird music Pete had heard before. The others continued their chanting, and as the music built to a cresendo, the quartz crystals of the cave began to take on different colors, as if responding to the music.

Pete stared at all this unable to speak. His throat was knotted, and he was rooted in place. Never before had he witnessed anything like this. Suddenly, he felt very alone, for he realized that he was trapped here, deep within the bowels of the Earth, with these creatures from a most unholy world.

He stared ahead, for he could do nothing else, and he watched the men as they completed their chanting. As the music died down, he saw several men carry in a young woman and lay her on the floor within the chalk design.

"Lucifer, Satan, Belial. We commend unto you the virgin sacrifice," screamed one of the women, older, more ugly than the rest.

"Give unto us a sign of your pleasure, most unholy one."

The young woman's body began to issue forth a sickening stench that permeated throughout the cavern. Pete choked on the smell, gagging, trying desperately to remain silent. He fought the numbing unconsciousness that was creeping slowly over him. He knew, somehow, that if he fell asleep, he would rise never again.

The woman began to glow, and a searing green fire soon covered her body. Her hair, a scarlet red, was consumed quikly as the flames licked across her face; the flesh was burning off, revealing a hideous skeleton beneath. The fire moved downwards consuming her luscious figure, burning deep through the skin, and turning the bones below to dust.

The green flames etched through her waist, her hips and legs, and soon there was only the charred ashes of decomposed skin and bone remaining.

A mocking laughter followed as the final flames died out.

Pete, horrified but unable to move, continued to watch the sickening ceremony below.

The ashes of the girl began to swirl and an eerie blue-green smoke bellowed forth from them. The smoke seemed to coalesce, grow tighter and tighter into itself until finally it took on the form of a creature...a dark monstrous creature the likes of which have never been seen on Earth.

It stood fifteen feet high, and its scaley skin, a deep sickening green, seemed to move over the creatures form, never remaining the same. The skin was a liquid, constantly flowing, taking on new shapes of horror, bending, twisting, reforming into every hideous shape possible. It was like an endless kaleidoscope of horror.

The creature stood within its small design unable to move. The old woman began to speak again. *"Creature of the Pentagram, there is an outsider in our midst. Find him...bring him to us."*

Pete stared at the old hag and suddenly realized that she was the woman of the house...the old crone with the voice of Venus. But there was a hint of madness in the voice, a madness that struck the very soul of Peter Welch. She erased one of the sides of the pentagram allowing the creature to escape. It moved, rather, slithered across the craggy cave and aimed itself directly towards Pete. He tried to move, but still his feet were rooted to the ground. The creature grabbed Pete Welch and threw him to the ground below. Welch started to run but his path was blocked in every direction by the naked bodies of the COVEN OF WITCHES. They moved in, slowly, and Welch began to cry.

"God...why me? What did I do? Oh God Oh God Oh God. Help me, God."

The old hag stared at him, her eyes a flaming scarlet, and she said, "Do not pray to your God within these walls. He will not answer you. Only Satan will listen to you here."

A male, dark and sinister, moved towards the old woman.

"Mother Satan. The time has come. Asmodeus calls for us."

"Enough, Brother Fear. I am aware of the time. Come. We must begin the sacred ceremony at once. And soon, my children. And soon Asmodeus will be free again. Free to rule the heavens as once he did."

"What of the mortal? Shall we dispose of him now?"

Mother Satan stared at the frightended figure of Pete Welch and smiled. Her hideous toothless grin sent shivers down his spine.

"No. Keep him alive for the present. Let him be witness to our glory. He is harmless, and can be disposed of at any time."

The creature returned to the pentagram and he started to grow, enveloping the entire cavern. One by one the witches marched into the creature and disappeared from view. Brother Fear grabbed Pete's arm, thrusting him towards the creature, but Pete broke loose and began to run. Fear-crazed, Peter Welch raced through the cavern corridors.

"The Fool thinks he can escape us, Mother Satan. Shall I bring him back?"

"No. I shall have that pleasure. Stand back."

Mother Satan's eyes seemed to glow an eerie red, and suddenly Pete found himself within a ball of living energy. The ball surrounded him, lifting him off the ground. He tried desperately to escape, but it was impossible, for each time he would touch the wall of the globe, an energy shock blasted through his body, rendering him momentarily unconscious.

The orb headed directly towards a wall, and Welch braced himself for the impact, but instead of a collision, the sphere, and Welch, went directly through the barrier as if they were intangible.

The energy globe continued flying through the cavern walls until it came to rest before Mother Satan. The sphere opened and Brother Fear grabbed Welch and forced him through the creature, and into another universe.

When he awoke, he found himself surrounded by crimson fire. Flames flickered all around him, but they did not burn. It was then that Welch discovered that he was naked. His first thoughts were to cover himself up, but there was nothing to cover up with.

A girl...she couldn't have been more than nineteen, walked up to him. At first he was embarrassed by his nakedness, but seeing how innocent she was of her own, he soon became more confident.

"I am Freda, daughter of Moloch. Is there anything you want?" she asked.

He looked at her. She had hair of crimson; her eyes were shimmering emeralds. She was beautiful...more beautiful than anyone he had ever seen before.

"N-No. Just get me outta here. Where am I?"

"You are in Hell."

"Hell? But how? I gotta get outta here, fast."

"Why? Don't you like it here? Feel the warmth, how it makes you alive. It is much more pleasant than the outer world. Are you sure that there is nothing I could bring you?"

His throat cried out. "Wine. Can I have some wine?"

She reached out towards him, and there was a bottle of wine in her hand.

"Here. Take this."

Suddenly through the veil of fire came Brother Fear.

"Out of here, Freda. Have we not forbade you entry to this cell block?"

"I only wanted to meet the human, Brother Fear. I meant no harm. Please believe me?"

"Time is tense...the situation requires nothing to distract us if we are to resurrect Asmodeus. For three thousand years we have planned this. Nothing must go wrong."

"But all I did..."

"Silence. Mother Satan will be told of this and she will pass judgement.

She is the ALL-MOTHER... *creator of us all.* Now go."

Brother Fear turned towards Welch. "As for you, mortal. If it were not for Mother Satan, you would have been sacrificed long ago. But know this well... this is only a reprieve. After Asmodeus, the All-Father, returns, you will die a most horrible death.

The words seemed to spill from Peter Welch's lips. "Who is Asmodeus? What's happening here?"

"There is a short time before the ceremony begins. Listen to this tale of long treacherous lament."

Pete closed his eyes as Brother Fear began his tale.

It began many thousands of years before. Asmodeus was the ruler of the Netherworld, the dark sinister land beneath the Earth's core. Asmodeus was Fear, Horror, all the terrors the world knew rolled into one. Asmodeus was HATE.

But there was also a hero of goodness. His name was Spartan. He entered the Netherworld and fought Asmodeus' hordes and defeated them. Then the two towering figures fought. Asmodeus fell before Spartan's trickery, and was exiled into Oblivion, the astral plane of Hell's-Earth.

But enough of Asmodeus still was lingering on Earth, and he called for his worshippers. The first was Mother Satan, and from her spawned all the others. They were the witches of the past, the horrors of the present, and the death-knell of the future.

They worked for centuries to free Asmodeus, and finally it was Mother Satan herself who conceived the final plan. Her children constructed a house ...and they were to take the essence of Mother Satan and build it into the structure. Her body would be used to house all their powers. As they grew more powerful, the body transfered their powers to the House, and soon it became strong enough to bring Asmodeus back from limbo.

But now it was time for the ceremony.

Mother Satan took her place in the center of the pentagram. The others formed a ring around her, sitting on their bare knees.

The body of Mother Satan began to glow. Her skin became transparent, and you could see the muscles working below. A small fetal shape began to grow within her stomach. Faster and faster it took shape... the shape of a baby. It was Asmodeus being reborn into the world.

Pete Welch was scared, more for himself than for anything else, but still he knew that if Asmodeus were reborn, it would mean the end of the world. He looked down in his hand and saw the bottle of wine was still there. He wanted it desperately, but he knew that he had to use it for other purposes. He smashed the bottle against a rock, and the red wine spilled downwards and seeped into the earthen floor.

He leaped towards the chanting crowd and broke through the line. He remembered what Mother Satan had told him when they first met. He had asked if she owned the house and she replied, "It is part of me; my children built it."

He took the broken bottle and shoved it into the stomach of Mother Satan. She gasped and her children woke from their trances.

"Get him. He has killed the All-Mother."

"Kill him."

Mother Satan began to rise, an anguished look of terror appeared on her face. She looked towards her naked stomach and saw the bottle was still imbedded within. It had punctured the fetus... it had killed the child Asmodeus. She fell to the floor, dead. Her scream died in the night.

Her children began to scream, and Peter Welch, tramp, thief, and now, murderer or savior, fell beneath their fists. But he had destroyed Asmodeus, and he died a man.

Mother Satan wailed and the caverns began to collapse. She was dead, and the house that was Mother Satan had to die as well. The Earth shifted, burying the cavern and all those who lived within under tons of rubble. The house simply disappeared from sight.

It was several weeks later that a couple, returning from an all-night party, chanced upon a baby lying in the middle of the road. When they got out of their car to investigate, they saw the baby was bleeding from multiple stab wounds. They rushed the child to the hospital where a team of surgeons labored for three days to save the child from death. Three months later, with the baby completely healed, the couple decided to adopt the infant.

And though they did not know why, they both felt the strange compunction to name the child, Asmodeus.

...and then there's CICERO!
THE OLD DARK HOUSE STOOD AT THE TOP OF THE HILL LIKE A BAD MEMORY, REACHING FOR THE SKY WITH FINGERS OF GNARLED WOOD AND WHISPERS. BEN SLICK PULLED HIS COAT CLOSER ABOUT HIS THROAT AS HE MADE HIS WAY UP THE RUTTED PATH THAT LED TO THE ERODING EDIFACE. HE DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BE THERE...AND SOMETHING INSIDE HIM KNEW IT!
LOUSY, RAINY NIGHT! I ONLY HOPE THE OLD LADY IS WORTH ALL THIS BOTHER!
SLICK'S HARSH KNOCK BROUGHT A FLURRY OF NOISE FROM INSIDE THE CRUMBLING OLD MONSTROSITY--THE SOFT SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS FOLLOWED BY THE SHRILL SQUEAK OF THE RUSTING DOOR HINGES AND...
YEA? IS THERE SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?
AUNT HILDY, DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME? IT'S ME--YOUR NEPHEW, BEN--BEN SLICK!
PAUL REINMAN

BENJAMIN? IS IT REALLY YOU? IT'S BEEN SO LONG! COME IN-- COME IN! I MUST INTRODUCE YOU TO MY FAMILY!
FAMILY? THERE'S NOTHING BUT CATS HERE... DOZENS OF THE HATEFUL THINGS!
AND SO, THE KINDLY OLD LADY INTRODUCES SLICK TO HER WORLD...
AND... THAT'S ALBERT... THAT ONE THERE IS FRED... THE BROWN PUSSY OVER THERE IS MARVIN...
CECILIA IS SITTING IN THE CORNER... CARMINE IS THE SHORT-HAIRED ONE THERE... AND...
WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE OLD LADY IS TRUE--SHE'S AS NUTTY AS A FRUITCAKE!
...AND THEN, OF COURSE, THERE'S CICERO... BUT HE ISN'T HERE RIGHT NOW! HE NEVER SEEMS TO BE AROUND WHEN I WANT HIM--ALWAYS KEEPING TO HIMSELF! HE'S A MOODY ONE, HE IS! THINKS HE'S BETTER THAN THE REST, JUST BECAUSE HE'S A PEDIGREE! WELL, IF HE WANTS TO BE SNOOTY, GOOD RIDDANCE TO HIM I SAY!
BUT ENOUGH OF THAT! LET'S SPEAK OF BETTER THINGS! COME-- I'LL SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOM!
THANK YOU, AUNT HILDY! I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO MY STAY HERE!
FAR MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER KNOW, YOU OLD HAG!
THE MINUTES SPIN BY AND ARE LOST IN THE DARKNESS AND FINALLY...
THE OLD LADY'S GOT TO BE SLEEPING BY NOW--AND I'VE GOT WORK TO DO!

SLICK'S BEDROOM DOOR SLIPS OPEN AND...
GET OUT OF MY WAY, YOU FLEA-BITTEN FELINE...HEAVEN, HOW I DESPISE CATS...THE THINGS PEOPLE WILL DO FOR MONEY... LOTS OF LOTS OF MONEY!
BEN SLICK MOVES STEALTHILY THRU THE DARKENED OLD HOUSE, SEARCHING, MOVING, SCATTERING THE FRAGILE PIECES OF AN OLD WOMAN'S LIFE ALL ABOUT AS HE GOES...
SOMEWHERE IN THIS RAMSHACKLE OLD RELIC, THAT SENILE OLD WOMAN HAS HIDDEN A FORTUNE--AND BEFORE I'M DONE, I'LL FIND IT!
ROOM AFTER ROOM FALLS INTO RUIN BEFORE BENJAMIN SLICK'S VIOLENT TOUCH BUT STILL NO MONEY IS TO BE FOUND...
BLAST IT! I KNOW IT'S HERE--IT HAS TO BE! I'LL FIND IT IF I HAVE TO RIP THIS MAUSOLEUM TO SHREDS!
UNTIL FINALLY, ON THE DUST-SHROUDED TOPMOST FLOOR OF THE OLD MANOR...
THE MONEY MUST BE HIDDEN IN THIS ROOM! IT'S THE ONLY PLACE LEFT! BUT THE DOOR IS LOCKED--I CAN'T OPEN IT!
SOMEWHERE IN THIS OLD DUSTTRAP, THERE HAS TO BE A KEY THAT FITS THIS DOOR! ALL I HAVE TO DO NOW IS--FIND IT!

MORNING STRETCHED ITS ARMS AND REACHED FOR THE SKY AND INSIDE THE ANCIENT ABODE...
IT'S CERTAINLY NICE OF YOU TO HELP ME WITH THE MORNING FEEDING, BENJAMIN! THINGS JUST HAVEN'T BEEN THE SAME SINCE OLD MR. GRADY, THE MILKMAN DISAPPEARED!
MY PLEASURE, AUNTY HILDY! I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO STRAIN YOURSELF!
AT LEAST NOT YET! YOU'RE TOO VALUABLE TO ME ALIVE! I MUST...
DEAR LORD! AROUND HER NECK--THAT MUST BE THE KEY I'M LOOKING FOR! THE OLD LADY HAD IT ALL ALONG!
AND BEFORE TODAY IS DONE, I'LL HAVE TO FIGURE SOME WAY TO GET IT!
TIME PASSES TEDIOUSLY UNTIL LATER THAT AFTERNOON WHEN...
AUNTY! AUNTY HILDY! COME HERE FOR A MOMENT! I HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL TO SHOW YOU!
THAT'S RIGHT, AUNTY! COME RIGHT THIS WAY!
I'M COMING, BENJAMIN--I'M COMING! THESE OLD LEGS AREN'T QUITE AS SPRY AS THE USED TO BE!

THEN SUDDENLY, AS THE DODDERING OLD WOMAN REACHES THE TOP OF THE STAIR...
AUNT HILDY--LOOK OUT!
I--I'M FALLING!
DOWN THE STAIRS, THE OLD WOMAN TOPPLES--OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
TH TH UMP ET A
THUMP!
UNTIL, AT LAST, THE OLD WOMAN IS STILL...
WELL, I'LL BE... SHE'S NOT DEAD!
SORRY, AUNTY HILDY, I TRULY AM! BUT I'LL MAKE MUCH BETTER USE OF YOUR FORTUNE THAN A DODDERING OLD FOSSIL LIKE YOU EVER COULD!
BEN SLICK'S FEET HARDLY TOUCH THE GROUND AS HE RACES UP THE REMAINING STAIRS AND HEADS FOR THE LOCKED ROOM...
MOVE, YOU BLASTED THING! GET OUT OF MY WAY! I'M NOT GOING TO WAIT ANY LONGER FOR THAT MONEY--NOT ONE SECOND LONGER!
FINGERS FUMBLING, SLICK FITS THE KEY TO THE ANCIENT LOCK, TWISTS AND...
IT WORKED!
THE KEY WORKED! IT'S ALL MINE NOW--ALL MINE! BUT I'D BEST GET A LIGHT FIRST! IT'S BLACK AS PITCH IN HERE!
AND MOMENTS LATER...
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! EVEN WITH THE LIGHT, THE DARKNESS IS THICK ENOUGH TO CUT WITH A KNIFE IN HERE!

FOR SEVERAL SILENT SECONDS, BEN SLICK LOOKS ABOUT THE ROOM, THEN SUDDENLY...
THOSE BLASTED CATS! THEY MUST HAVE SLAMMED THE DOOR SHUT AS THEY WALKED OUT OF THE ROOM! THANK HEAVENS, I HAVE THE LIGHT! I CAN STILL...
SLAM!
MY GOD! I HEAR BREATHING! THERE'S SOME-THING IN HERE WITH ME! I...
OH, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, MAN--GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF! ONE OF THE CATS MUST HAVE GOTTEN LOCKED IN HERE WITH YOU! THAT'S ALL! YOU...
OH, NO! IT CAN'T BE! IT CAN'T BE! NOOOOO!
AUNT HILDY--I'M SORRYyyyy!!
THE SOUNDS OF TORTURED SCREAMING AWOKE THE BATTERED OLD WOMAN WHO LAY ON THE DRAWING ROOM FLOOR...
EEEYYAAHHH
OH, GOOD! NOW I WON'T HAVE TO FEED CICERO TODAY!
...AT LAST, THE SCREAMING STOPPED!
THE END

ANATOMICAL MONSTER
IT'S JUST A PIECE OF PAPER! HA-HA! WE'LL BURN IT! SEND IT UP IN SMOKE! IT CAN'T HURT US THEN! WHA--?!
TOO LATE! LOOK! HERE IT COMES! IT'S GOT US! HELP!
JOE KIRK WAS A MEDICAL STUDENT! HE THOUGHT THE CHART WOULD HELP HIM IN HIS STUDY OF HUMAN ANATOMY! HE LAUGHED AT THE OLD MAN'S WARNING! TOO LATE KIRK REALIZED THAT HERE, IMPRISONED ON THIS PIECE OF PAPER, WAS A THING GHASTLY BEYOND ALL IMAGINATION...

ON AN OLD ANTIQUE SHOP...
I JUST THOUGHT I'D LOOK AROUND! MIGHT PICK OUT A LITTLE PRESENT FOR MY GIRL! SHE LIKES ANTIQUES!
CAN'T SPEND VERY MUCH! YOU SEE, I'M JUST A MEDICAL STUDENT! I DON'T HAVE VERY MUCH MONEY! I'D LIKE THIS LOCKET, IF IT'S NOT TOO EXPENSIVE...
MEDICAL STUDENT? JUST A MOMENT! I'VE GOT SOMETHING ESPECIALLY SUITED FOR YOU!
JACK KIRK WAS PUZZLED THE OLD MAN WAS ACTING VERY QUEERLY! HIS HANDS WERE SHAKING AS HE UNLOCKED HIS SAFE AND....
HERE IT IS! S-SOMETHING I TREASURE VERY HIGHLY! I--I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT! YOU'RE A MEDICAL STUDENT - JUST THE PERSON FOR IT!
WHAT IS IT?
NO! DON'T LOOK AT IT! JUST TAKE IT WITH YOU!
YOU WANT ME TO BUY SOMETHING WITHOUT LOOKING AT IT? DON'T BE SILLY.
I-I WON'T CHARGE YOU ANYTHING! I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT! IT'S--IT'S A MEDICAL CHART OF THE HUMAN BODY! IT SHOWS THE MUSCLES! -- THE NERVE STRUCTURE! IT'S AUTHENTIC -- WONDERFULLY, ACCURATELY DRAWN! BUT DON'T OPEN IT! NOT HERE!
KIRK TOOK THE CHART, AND, AS HE LEFT THE OLD ANTIQUE SHOP - - -
HE'S A LITTLE OFF HIS ROCKER - MIGHT AS WELL HUMOR HIM!
THERE'S NO NEED TO THANK ME! I NO LONGER WANT IT!
WELL, THANKS A LOT! I'M GLAD TO HAVE IT!

AT ONE TIME I, TOO, WAS A SCIENTIST! I DREW THE CHART! YOU'LL FIND IT CORRECT TO THE LAST VEIN!
KIRK WAS AMUSED, AND, NATURALLY, INTENSELY CURIOUS! AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL, IN HIS DORMITORY ...
HE SURE MADE A BIG FUSS OVER THE THING! I WONDER WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!
WHY, IT'S WONDERFUL! WHOEVER DREW THIS CERTAINLY KNEW ANATOMY! I'VE NEVER SEEN A CHART WITH SUCH DETAIL! THIS SURELY WILL MAKE A HIT WITH THE PROF! I'LL SHOW IT TO HIM!
THE EXCITED KIRK TOOK HIS FIND TO DR. NORTON, HEAD OF THE SCHOOL, AND ...
IT'S MARVELOUS! I'LL USE IT IN CLASS! WHERE DID YOU GET IT, JACK? IT'S THE MOST DETAILED ANATOMICAL CHART I'VE EVER SEEN!
AN OLD FELLOW IN AN ANTIQUE SHOP GAVE IT TO ME! HE'S A QUEER OLD DUCK! HE SEEMED TO WANT TO GET RID OF IT!
THAT NIGHT, IN THE DARK, SILENT CLASSROOM...
AND THE NEXT DAY, IN THE PHYSIOLOGY CLASSROOM...
NOW, HERE WE HAVE THE COMPLETE NERVOUS STRUCTURE! FROM THE BRAIN, THE MOTOR IMPULSES ...
SAY, THAT SURE SHOWS EVERYTHING CLEARLY! BEATS ANYTHING I'VE EVER LOOKED AT!

THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN KIRK LOOKED AT THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER ....

COUPLE OF HYSTERICAL GIRLS THOUGHT THEY SAW A *MONSTER* YOUNG GIRLS CAN IMAGINE ANYTHING! PROBABLY NOTHING BUT A SHADOW THAT FRIGHTENED THEM!

DAILY ARGUS

HUGE MONSTER LOOSE IN CITY

GIRLS SEE MONSTER

JACK KIRK NEVER THOUGHT OF HIS CHART! HE SAW NO CONNECTION! WHY SHOULD HE? BUT THAT NEXT EVENING .....

BEAUTIFUL PICTURE, WASN'T IT, JACK? I LOVED IT!

SURE WAS, ALICE!

CANDY SHOP

50 100

FLAMING LOVE

EXOTIC LOVE

IT WAS A WONDERFUL NIGHT, JUST MADE FOR LOVERS! KIRK WALKED HIS GIRL HOME BY THE LONELIEST ROUTE HE COULD PICK! BUT, SUDDENLY...

WHA..?

JACK! LOOK! WHAT'S THAT? EEOWWW!

ANOTHER YOUNG COUPLE CHANCED TO BE THERE ON THE SHADY LANE, AND IN THAT TERRIBLE MOMENT...

HELP! SAVE ME! AAIIIEEE! GET AWAY YOU *MONSTER!*

JACK! JACK!

THAT'S - THAT'S THE THING THAT WAS SEEN LAST NIGHT!

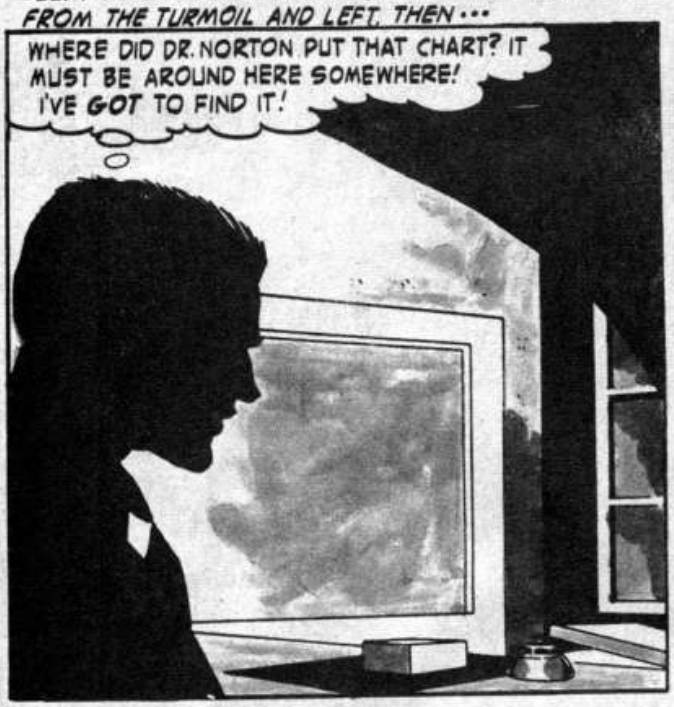
MY CHART! IT LOOKS LIKE MY CHART!

YOUNG KIRK AND ALICE FLED! THEY DID NOT SEE THE TERRIBLE CLIMAX, THERE IN THE MOONLIT WOODS...

HA-HA-HA!

HELP! HELP! SAVE ME!

AT ALICE'S HOME THEY REPORTED WHAT THEY HAD SEEN! AS SOON AS HE COULD, JACK KIRK ESCAPED FROM THE TURMOIL AND LEFT. THEN ...

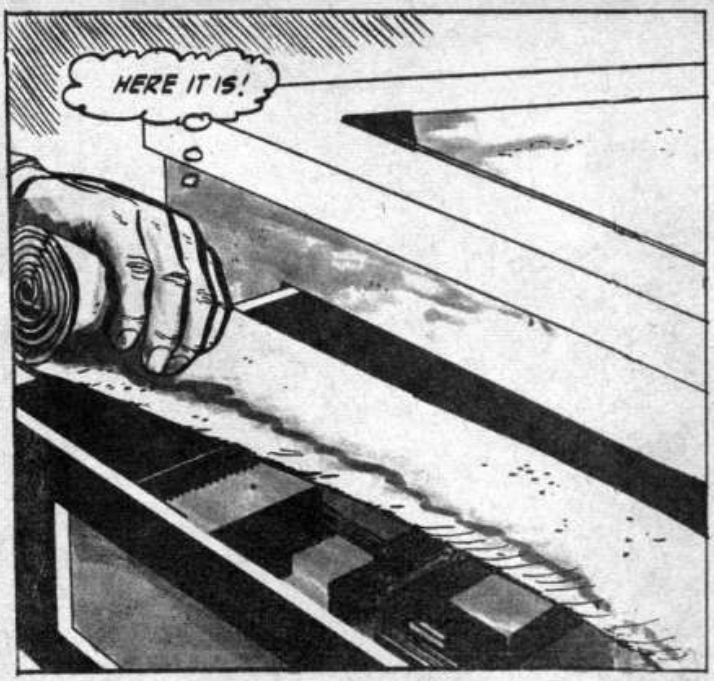


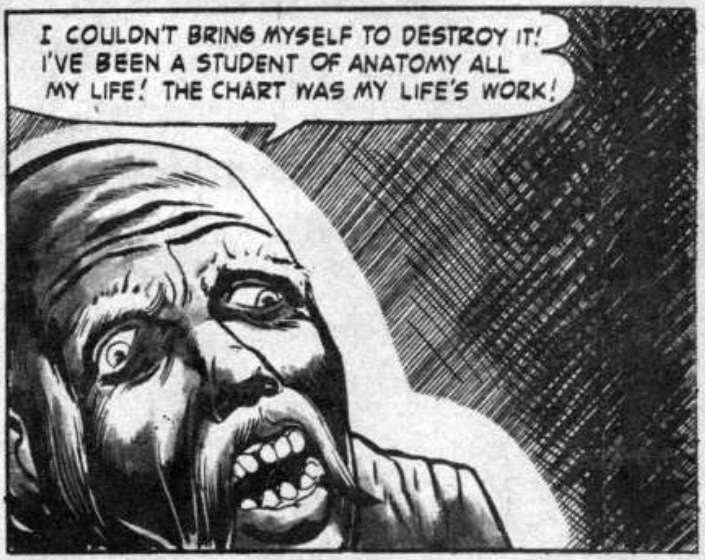
IT WAS MIDNIGHT NOW! CARRYING THE ROLLED CHART, KIRK RUSHED TO THE OLD ANTIQUE SHOP, ROUTED OUT THE PROPRIETOR, AND ...

YOU.. YOU PROMISED ME YOU'D BURN IT! YOU BROKE YOUR PROMISE!
YOU KNEW THE - THE THING WAS DIABOLIC! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME? WHY DID YOU LET ME TAKE IT WITHOUT KNOWING?

HYSTERICALLY THE OLD MAN CONFESSED A GRIM AND TERRIBLE STORY! KIRK TURNED COLD WITH SHUDDERING HORROR AS HE HEARD IT!

I HAD THE DREAM WHEN I WAS YOUNG, LIKE YOU! BUT I NEEDED MONEY! I WANTED MY OWN LABORATORY! I WANTED TO GIVE ALL MY TIME TO ANATOMY!





"BILL GRANT AND HIS BEAUTIFUL WIFE WERE MY BEST FRIENDS! BILL WAS RICH! HE WAS A BROODING FELLOW! HE ACTED STRANGELY!"
BILL CERTAINLY ACTS QUEER! AND YOU CAN'T MISS SEEING THAT GLORIA'S AFRAID OF HIM! SHE ACTS HALF-SCARED TO DEATH, THE POOR KID!

"I PLANNED IT THEN! I WOULD KILL BILL GRANT! GLORIA WOULD BE RICH, AND I WOULD MARRY HER! I TOLD MYSELF I HAD A GOOD EXCUSE!"

BILL'S *INSANE!* THERE'S NO QUESTION OF THAT IN MY MIND! HE MIGHT KILL GLORIA! I'LL SAVE HER FROM HIM!

"I PLANNED IT CAREFULLY! I GOT MY CHANCE ONE NIGHT WHEN WE WERE ALONE, AND ..."

CRACK!

"NO ONE EVER SUSPECTED ME! POOR GLORIA DIED SOON AFTER I MARRIED HER! I WENT ON WITH MY MEDICAL STUDIES! THEN--ONLY LAST YEAR--I WAS READY TO DRAW MY MASTER CHART! AND WHEN I HAD FINISHED IT, I SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT.."

WHY--WHY I'VE DRAWN *BILL GRANT'S* FACE! I THOUGHT I'D FORGOTTEN HIM YEARS AGO!

I HADN'T REALIZED! I GUESS, SUBCONSCIOUSLY, THE MEMORY OF HIS FACE HAD ALWAYS BEEN WITH ME! AND NOW, SUDDENLY..."

WHA--?!

SO YOU'VE BROUGHT ME BACK! HA-HA-HA! THANK YOU, MY OLD FRIEND!

"EVER SINCE THEN, THE TERRIBLE THING HAS BEEN HAUNTING ME, THREATENING ME..."

LET ME ALONE!

HA-HA!

HE-HE'S ALWAYS AROUND! AND HE'S A *MANIAC* I-I LOCKED THE CHART IN MY SAFE, BUT IT-IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE! I WANTED TO BURN IT! BUT I COULDN'T BEAR TO! I WAS *AFRAID* THAT IF I KEPT IT, HE WOULD KILL *ME!* SO I GAVE IT TO *YOU!*

YOU FOOL! I'LL BURN IT--NOW!
YES! YES! THAT'S WHAT WE'LL DO! WE'LL BURN IT!
ROLL IT OPEN! HOLD IT UP, IT'LL BURN BETTER! HURRY! HURRY, I SAY!
YES! ALL RIGHT! I'LL-- I'LL HOLD IT!
EMPTY! LOOK--IT'S EMPTY! HE-- HE'S GONE!
WHAT--?
THEN SUDDENLY, TO THEIR HORROR, AS THEY TURNED TOWARD THE DOORWAY...
HA-HA-HA
HELP! HELP!
HA-HA!
AAAIIEE!
END

THE HANDS OF DEATH!
LIFE WAS WORTHLESS TO ERIK DULAN WITHOUT A PERFECT PAIR OF HANDS WHEN HE FOUND THEM! IT WAS LIKE BEING BROUGHT BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING AFTER KNOWING THE DANK CHILL OF THE LONESOME GRAVE! BUT DULAN DIDN'T KNOW THAT WHAT HE CHERISHED WERE THE HANDS OF DEATH!
ERIK DULAN, WORLD FAMOUS VIOLINIST, WAS PLUNGED INTO DESPAIR AFTER AN ACCIDENT WHICH LEFT HIS HANDS MANGLED AND TWISTED!
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO PLAY AGAIN! LOOK AT THESE HANDS ...SCARRED AND MISSHAPEN ...LIFELESS LUMPS OF SLOW MOVING FLESH!
I'D GIVE ANYTHING-- MY LIFE--FOR A NEW PAIR OF HANDS!

HE WENT FROM DOCTOR TO DOCTOR...AND AWAYS IT WAS THE SAME STORY...
CAN'T YOU DO **ANYTHING** TO LOOSEN THE MUSCLES... MAKE MY FINGERS REALLY **ALIVE** ONCE **AGAIN?**
SORRY, DULAN! THERE'S **NOTHING** MEDICAL SCIENCE CAN DO FOR YOU!
THEN ONE NIGHT HE HAPPENED TO OVERHEAR A WHISPERED NAME. IT STRUCK AN ECHO IN HIS MEMORY, AND...
HIS NAME IS **NECROS! DR. NECROS.** THEY SAY HE CAN DO **ANYTHING...** EVEN BRING THE **DEAD BACK TO LIFE!**
NECROS! I REMEMBER THAT NAME! A PRACTITIONER OF THE ANCIENT ART OF **BLACK MAGIC!**
I'VE TRIED **EVERYTHING ELSE...** WHY NOT **BLACK MAGIC?** I'D GLADLY TRADE MY **SOUL** TO MAKE THESE HANDS NEW!
EAGERLY, DULAN SOUGHT NECROS' ADDRESS IN THE CITY PHONE BOOK, BUT...
NECRUMOS... NECTER...IT **ISN'T HERE!**
AND **THEN....**
THAT'S STRANGE. I'D SWEAR IT WASN'T THERE A **MOMENT AGO!** CAN HE KNOW ALREADY THAT I'M SEEKING HIM? I'LL GO THERE AT **ONCE!**
DR. NECROS IN WISTERIA DR...
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, **GLEAMING** DULLY IN THE MOONLIGHT LIKE THE **BLEACHED BONES** OF THE **DROWNED,** STOOD THE WALLS OF NECROS' ISOLATED MANSION...
THERE'S SOMETHING **FRIGHTENING** ABOUT THIS PLACE, AND YET I **MUST** ENTER!

DULAN'S FEAR TURNED TO TERROR WHEN HE SAW NECROS FACE TO FACE!
I CAN GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT...BUT ARE YOU PREPARED TO PAY THE PRICE?
YES! YES! I'LL PAY ANYTHING!
THE PRICE IS NOT ANYTHING... IT IS EVERYTHING! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
WHATEVER IT IS, I'LL PAY IT...ONLY, FIX MY HANDS!
I'M NOT GOING TO FIX YOUR HANDS... I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU NEW ONES! YOU WILL CHOOSE THEM YOURSELF!
HE MUST BE MAD...AND YET... HE SEEMS SO SURE OF HIMSELF! WHAT HAVE I TO LOSE?
SUDDENLY, WORDS CRACKLED FROM NECROS' LIPS, AND THE ROOM FILLED WITH A WRITHING CLOUD OF MIST, LADEN WITH THE ROTTEN STENCH OF DEATH!
IT MUST BE MY IMAGINATION...AND YET I'M SURE I SEE STRANGE SHAPES AND FORMS IN THAT UNEARTHLY MIST!
SWIFTLY THE VAGUE SHAPES MATERIALIZED FROM THE REEKING FOG, AND...
THERE! CHOOSE YOUR HANDS! WHICHEVER ONES YOU WANT WILL BE YOURS!

AS THOUGH IN A DAZE, DULAN INSPECTED THE FIRST HORRIBLE PAIR OF OUTSTRETCHED HANDS!
NO...NOT THESE...THE FINGERS ARE TOO NARROW... NOT STRONG ENOUGH!
AND THESE ARE TOO MUSCULAR ...TOO BLUNT...NOT ENOUGH DELICACY OF MOVEMENT!
AAAH...THESE ARE JUST WHAT I WOULD WANT...STRONG HANDS, AND YET, THE FINGERS ARE LITHE, CAPABLE OF QUICK MOVEMENT!
THEY WILL BE YOURS! CLOSE YOUR EYES, AND GRASP THEM WITH YOUR OWN HANDS...FIRMLY...
AND WHEN DULAN OPENED HIS EYES...
THE HANDS! THEY..THEY'RE MINE NOW! WHERE ARE THE--THE MEN THAT WERE HERE A MOMENT AGO?
STILL HERE-- BUT YOU CANNOT SEE THEM!
WHAT WONDERFUL FINGERS... HOW THEY FLEX AND STRETCH! ...HOW STRONG AND YET HOW DELICATE! WHEN DO I PAY YOU?
YOU HAVE ALREADY PAID ME! FAREWELL!

DULAN'S FIRST CONCERT AFTER A YEAR'S IDLENESS WAS THE SENSATION OF THE SEASON!
I'VE **NEVER** PLAYED BETTER!
SUCH **STRANGE,** STIRRING MUSIC...IT...IT'S BEAUTIFUL... AND **HORRIBLE!**

ON HIS WAY HOME, DULAN'S MIND WAS FILLED WITH THE APPLAUSE AND PRAISE EVOKED BY HIS PLAYING...

AND, WHILE DULAN WAS BUSY WITH HIS DREAMS, HIS HANDS WERE BUSY, TOO.....

UNKNOWN TO HIM, WITH A CUNNING WILL OF THEIR OWN, THE HANDS **REACHED OUT!** THE FINGERS, LIKE TEN VICIOUS, WRITHING SERPENTS, CLUTCHED AND GRASPED...AND **SQUEEZED!**

PLEASE...I...I MUST HAVE BEEN DREAMING...A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE! YOU...YOU MUST EXCUSE ME! I...I'LL PAY YOU WELL FOR...FOR THE FRIGHT I MUST HAVE CAUSED YOU!
HMMFFF! ASLEEP, EH? I WONDER!

FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP, DULAN KEPT HIS HANDS FOLDED IN FRONT OF HIM...
I MUST WATCH THEM...KEEP WATCHING THEM ...EVERY MINUTE...EVERY SECOND!

HE GOT OFF AT THE FIRST STOP, REGISTERED IN A HOTEL, AND LOCKED HIMSELF IN HIS ROOM...
THEY'RE HORRIBLE...WICKED...WHENEVER I PASSED SOMEONE ON THE STREET, I FELT THEM ACHING TO CLAW AT THE WARM FLESH OF HIS THROAT!

AND THEN, ONE DAY, THERE WAS A KNOCK ON DULAN'S DOOR....
DULAN! YOU MUST OPEN! YOU MUST!
IT...IT'S GEORGE EVANS...MY BEST FRIEND! I'LL TELL HIM THE WHOLE STORY...MAYBE HE CAN HELP!
RAP RAP!

ERIK! GOOD LORD, MAN! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOU...YOU LOOK GHASTLY! I'VE BEEN SEARCHING EVERYWHERE FOR YOU! I FINALLY LOCATED...
COME IN...I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!

BUT AS SOON AS THE DOOR WAS SHUT...
ERIK! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
GEORGE! I CAN'T HELP IT! THESE ACCURSED HANDS! I...I CAN'T CONTROL THEM! HEAVEN HELP ME! THEY...THEY'VE GROWN STRONGER THAN I AM!

MOMENTS LATER...
I...I MUST SEE NECROS AT ONCE... GET HIM TO TAKE THEM BACK...HE MUST TAKE THEM BACK!
YOU...YOU'VE KILLED HIM!

UNAWARE THAT HE WAS THE OBJECT OF A CITY-WIDE SEARCH, DULAN **SPED** TO NECROS' GRIM MANSION...

BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF NECROS, AND ALL DULAN HEARD WAS THE HOLLOW ECHO OF HIS OWN VOICE, AND A HINT OF HORRIBLE SPECTRAL LAUGHTER FROM THE DARK CORNERS OF THE ROOM...

AND AS DULAN LEFT....

LATER, AT THE STATION HOUSE...

I KNEW THAT GUY WAS **LYING** WHEN HE SAID HE WAS DULAK, THE VIOLINIST. THESE PRINTS SHOW PLAIN AS DAY THAT HE'S KURT LAJOS...WANTED FOR **STRANGLING** IN A DOZEN CITIES!
WH--WHAT? BUT THAT'S **IMPOSSIBLE!** YOU SURE YOU GOT HIS PRINTS RIGHT?

YEH...SURE! I DOUBLE CHECKED! WHAT'S WRONG?
NOTHING MUCH... EXCEPT THAT LAJOS WAS TRIED, CONVICTED AND ELECTROCUTED **TEN** YEARS AGO! I...I **SAW HIM BURN MYSELF!**

WAS IT HIS **IMAGINATION,** OR WAS DULAN'S CELL REALLY FILLED WITH THE ASHEN FIGURES OF THE LONG DEAD...**MOCKING** HIM UNMERCIFULLY?

WHAT WITH THE CHANGING TIMES AND THE INFIRMATIES OF OLD AGE, THE ONCE GREAT ACTOR OF MYSTERY AND HORROR, NOEL CLIFF BEGAN TO FIND JOBS FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. AND SO, WITH HIS HEALTH FAILING, HE DECIDED TO BID FAREWELL TO THE THEATER.

THE GRUESOME FACES OF MR. CLIFF!

THIS IS FAREWELL MY LITTLE FRIENDS!
HOW MANY TIMES DID WE THRILL THE AUDIENCES, EH?
HOW MANY TIMES WERE OUR NAMES IN LIGHTS?
NOW WE ARE OLD AND LIKE SHADOWS WE FADE AWAY!

A LAST GOOD-BYE TO YOU, MY FRIENDS!
BOTH YOU AND I WILL LIVE IN THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO WITNESSED OUR GREATNESS!
NAME
CLICK!
GOODNIGHT, MR. CLIFF, GUESS WE WON'T BE SEEING MUCH OF YOU AROUND HERE ANYMORE, EH?
GOODNIGHT.
LATER THAT WEEK...
THAT SAME PAIN...IT'S WORSE THAN EVER! I'VE GOT TO SEE DR. SEARES.
I'VE HAD THESE ATTACKS FOR YEARS. BUT NOW IT'S BEEN GETTING WORSE AND THEY LAST LONGER!
WE'LL TAKE SOME TESTS!
I'M AFRAID I HAVE RATHER BAD NEWS FOR YOU, MR. CLIFF.
THE TESTS PROVED POSITIVE. YOU HAVE AN INCURABLE DISEASE... I COULD TAKE MORE TESTS
NO, NO THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY!

TRY NOT TO DESPAIR!
MEDICAL SCIENCE IS ALWAYS COMING UP WITH NEW CURES. TRY TO SEE ME EVERY WEEK!
THE NEWS TURNS NOEL STRAIGHT BACK TO THE THEATER.
I'M GOING TO DIE THE FINAL CURTAIN. HOW IGNOMINIOUS AN END TO THE LEGEND OF NOEL CLIFF. I MUST GO BACK TO MY DRESSING ROOM. THE PLACE WHERE I FELT SUCH GREAT STRENGTH!
HOW GOOD IT FEELS THE BACK ALLEYS OF THE THEATER!
I WONDER IF MY FRIENDS ARE STILL HERE?
YES, YES, THEY ARE HERE, AND THEY DON'T BERATE ME FOR DESERTING THEM!
GORGO, HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE WE WAITED FOR OUR CUE EH? SHALL WE ONCE MORE TOGETHER ACT AS ONE?
YES, YES, GORGO, WE WILL... YOU FEEL SO GOOD ON MY SKIN, ALMOST AS IF...
YES... YES I DO FEEL STRANGELY ALIVE. STRONGER THAN I'VE EVER FELT BEFORE!

YES, GORGO, YOU HAVE GIVEN ME STRENGTH! AND WE SHALL NOT WASTE IT ON AUDIENCES... NO, NO. THIS TIME WE WILL SEEK REVENGE ON THE UNGRATEFUL PUBLIC!
THERE SHALL BE TERROR AS THIS CITY HAS NEVER TASTED!
WE SACRIFICE A VICTIM TO OUR POWER!
THE SLEEPING CITY HAS VERY FEW WITNESSES TO THE CREATURE WHO STALKS FOR ITS PREY.
AHAH! OUR FIRST VICTIM!
S...SOMEONE OR SOMETHING'S FOLLOWIN' ME... WHAT IS IT... GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
RRRAAA
NO... NO! NNNNN...

THE SCENE IS FINISHED, GORGO. WE MUST NOT OVER ACT...
THEN IN SILENCE, THEY DEPART.
THAT BEAST MUST HAVE HAD INCREDIBLE STRENGTH!
HOW TRUE, HOW VERY TRUE!
SOX LOSE 2-1
REDS WIN 6-4
Daily Blade
MONSTER STRIKES
POLICE BAFFLED
STORY ON PAGE 6
AND SO, A WEEK LATER...
AH, QUASIMODO, IT IS TIME FOR OUR OUTING. YOU HAVE BEEN VERY PATIENT. AND FOR THAT YOUR REWARD IS SOON IN COMING!
WE MUST NOT FAIL OUR AUDIENCE!
AHA! HE WHO IS UNAWARE...
HA HA HA
ONE WHO LOOKS NOT ABOUT WITH CAREFUL EYE, GETS HANGED! HA, HA HA, HA, HA!

NOW TO OFFER SOME CENTER STAGE ACTION!
SO TO GIVE YOU EVERY POSSIBILITY FOR APPLAUSE! HA, HA HA, HA, HA!
YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT. EVEN STANISLOFSKY WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD!
HEE HEE HEE
SMASH

AT THE ACTORS' TAVERN...

YES, THEY'RE ALL READING ABOUT MY EXPLOITS. I WONDER IF THEY SUSPECT THAT I'M THE AUTHOR OF THE THEATER OF DEATH!
DAILY BAR POLICEMAN MURDERED BY KILLER

HI, RAY! SEEMS EVERYBODY'S READING ABOUT THE MURDERS!
WE WERE JUST SAYING IT'S AS IF SOMEONE WERE IMPERSONATING YOU IN REAL LIFE!

WELL, IF IT ISN'T THE HAS-BEEN OF THE HORROR SET!
LINDA!
ARE YOU GOING TO TELL US THAT THE THING THAT'S SPOOKIN' THE CITY IS AN AMATEUR COMPARED TO YOU!
WHY DON'T YOU KEEP STILL!
I THINK YOU LOST YOUR WAY WHEN YOU CAME IN HERE...THEY SELL VITAMINS IN THE CORNER DRUG STORE DOWN THE STREET!
HA,HA,
HA,HA!
YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, LINDA! YOU'LL PAY DEARLY!
FOR YOU, LINDA, WE'VE DECIDED ON A SPECIAL PART, SOMETHING THAT WILL CLOSE YOUR VULGAR MOUTH FOREVER!
THE STAGE IS SET. MY CUE IS AT HAND! THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU, MY PET!
YOU LOOK LOVELY TONIGHT, LINDA!...DRACULA NEVER HAD A MORE BEAUTIFUL BRIDE!
WH... WHO ARE YOU?
AAAAAAAAA!
I LEAVE YOU, LINDA! THE PERFECT TABLEAU FOR THE PERFECT ENDING! YOUR LIPS WILL NEVER UTTER ANOTHER INSULT...

THAT LOOKS LIKE THE GUY!
YEAH! FITS THE DESCRIPTION ALL RIGHT!
HEY, YOU! STOP! STOP OR I'LL SHOOT!
THE STAGE DOOR! I'LL LOSE MYSELF IN THE THEATER!
WHAT? A REHEARSAL? PANT! PANT! GOTTA THINK FAST!
O.K., BRAD, LET'S SEE THAT SUN SPOT!
SEE IF IT'S BRIGHT ENOUGH!
OKAY YOU, FREEZE!
HEY!
DON'T SHOOT! YOU MIGHT HIT ONE OF THE ACTORS!
THE SUN! DRACULA CANNOT LIVE IN THE SUN!
NO! NO!
I CAN'T BREATHE!
AAAAAAAA
IT'S INCREDIBLE, LAWSON! WE'VE BEEN CHASING A SKELETON! WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE ANIMATED HIM?
WHO KNOWS? IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE DEVIL HIMSELF!
The END